

GEORGES
BATAILLE

On

Nietzsche

translated and with an introduction by

STUART KENDALL

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Translator’s Introduction

The Wanderer and His Shadow

Always stay masked: the more a man is on a high wire, the more he has need of being incognito.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

We have to grant Nietzsche a place that belongs to no one else.

Georges Bataille, letter to Maurice Nadeau, 19 April 1958

With Nietzsche, everything is mask.

Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence*

Georges Bataille wrote *Sur Nietzsche*—rendered here as *On Nietzsche*—from January to October 1944 during the final nine months of the Nazi occupation of France. The bulk of the work consists of a detailed diary of those months, thus inevitably a record of life during wartime: of waiting for news of the imminent invasion, of troops rushing through the streets, of fighter planes tearing through the skies overhead, of bombers striking trains and arms depots, smoke billowing in the sky, artillery and machine-gun fire in the near distance.

For the first few months of this period, Bataille lived in the Paris studio of the painter Balthus, the younger brother of his friend Pierre Klossowski. Then, in April 1944, still suffering from the resurgent tuberculosis that had been diagnosed two years previously, Bataille moved to Samois-sur-Seine, a small village seventy kilometers south of the city. Bataille’s lover—and future wife—Diana (known as Diane) Kotchoubey de Beauharnois had recently taken up residence nearby in Bois-le-Roi. In October 1944, at the end of this period, two months after the liberation of Paris, Bataille returned to the city for the duration of the winter and spring before moving to Vézelay

with Diane in June. *On Nietzsche* emerges as an unexpected chronicle of contrasts and tensions, of urban and rural streets and forests, of community and isolation, dislocation and stasis, convalescence and vigor, fevered excitement and suffocating boredom: of world historical events grinding against everyday minutia.

But the book is not only a chronicle: it begins with a preface that situates the work as one of ethical and political philosophy, or rather, more pointedly, as an antifascist work written under conditions of enemy occupation, which is to say as a book written as a covert act of war. A band wrapped around the first edition read “At the antipodes of Fascism.” The brief first part of the book presents Nietzsche’s life and work primarily through quotations, cursorily enough to feel like an afterthought: the section begins with a quote from the preface to Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*: “But let us leave Mr. Nietzsche . . .” The second part consists of a revised version of a lecture on sin that Bataille delivered in March 1944 to an audience of writers, philosophers, and theologians, about which we will have more to say below. Part three, the diary, is loosely divided into thematically organized chronological units and takes up two-thirds of the book. It is followed by a series of appendices, which develop topics and themes raised in the main text. My point here is to remark upon the startling heterogeneity of the book, for which the word assemblage might, as is often the case in Bataille’s work, be more appropriate. Page by page, sometimes paragraph by paragraph, the text shifts style, tone, and register when not also shifting between genres: essay, lecture, diary, with occasional bursts of poetry, amid pages and pages of direct quotation. The book is by turns philosophical, theological, and literary; it is political and personal; topical though in many ways persistently untimely.

Yet, for all that, *On Nietzsche* is arguably a more orderly book than either of its predecessors in Bataille’s oeuvre, *Inner Experience* (1943) and *Guilty* (1944), each of which all but falls to pieces in a readers’ hands. In those books, the texts coil around and interrupt one another; thoughts and developments break off in fragments: the composition of portions of *Inner Experience* precedes *Guilty*, though the text as a whole was assembled as an unremarked interruption in the notebooks from which *Guilty* derives. *On Nietzsche*, by contrast, though thematically and stylistically similar to these books, is more self-contained and precise. For a book subtitled “The Will to Chance,” *On Nietzsche* is, I think, a work of surprising confidence and clarity.

This is all the more surprising given the company these pages kept in Bataille’s notebooks at the time. Several works of poetry and fiction were slowly gestating—*Le Mort* (The Dead Man), *L’Oresteia* (The Oresteia),

L'Archangélique (Archangelic), *La Maison Burlée* (The Burning House)—alongside Bataille's most persistent—or perhaps resistant—long-term project, *Le Part Maudite* (The Accursed Share). *Archangelic* would be published in April 1944; *The Oresteia* completed in September and published the following year. *The Burning House*, a screenplay, written in January 1944, would be rewritten in the fall but ultimately abandoned. In the meantime, in the spring and summer of 1944, while writing *On Nietzsche*, Bataille also wrote *L'Alleluiah: Catéchisme de Dianus* (Alleluia: The Catechism of Dianus), based on letters sent to Diane the previous year, as well as an abortive novel titled *Julie*. *Alleluia: The Catechism of Dianus* would be published in 1947 and, later, appended to the second edition of *Guilty* (1961). The fall of 1944 also saw Bataille working on notes for a novel titled *Costume d'un Curé Mort*, of which his short text *Scissiparity* (1949) is possibly a fragment, as well as another abandoned text, *Le Tombe de Louis XXX* (The Tomb of Louis XXX). Intermixed with all of these fictions and poetic fragments and alongside the diaries of *On Nietzsche* are, again, notes and drafts for the early version of *The Accursed Share*.¹

By including the notes and drafts for *On Nietzsche* in this edition, the reader can follow Bataille's thought through the main text but also perceive the gaps and omissions, the shifts and elisions, traced in his notebooks, where these other works insert or assert themselves, where diary gives way to fiction and fiction to theoretical general economy and vice versa. Particularly in passages from the first part of the diary, on the relationship between a lover and a beloved, the proximity of the text of *On Nietzsche* to both *Alleluia: The Catechism of Dianus* and *Julie* profoundly challenges the laws of genre.² When, for example, he writes, in *On Nietzsche* "I can imagine lovers voluntarily maintaining difficult conditions," we should remember both that he was then living in those very difficult conditions and that the sentence could just as easily, though with different effect, have appeared in either *Alleluia* or *Julie*.

In the notes for this volume, Bataille mentions, in passing, "the rules to which I hold myself if I write." These rules remain merely suggestive, though they undoubtedly determine and delimit the specific nature—style, genre, etc.—and the related content of his writing. As should be clear, Bataille's notebooks from the period push multidiscursivity to the limits of discursive heterogeneity without for all that being utterly haphazard. Formlessness is an effect of the disruption of form. Bataille's discursive registers, styles, and tropes simultaneously echo, reinforce, and rupture one another, overflowing semantic bounds, as he shuffles words and ideas in a discursive gambling spree, a literary will to chance.

Of course, much of what Bataille wrote during this period—and indeed throughout his life—remained unpublished until after his death. *On Nietzsche* gathers several threads of the moment that seem intentionally destined for publication. The fate of the other writings was less certain. *The Oresteia* gestated in notes and drafts for more than two years before its initial publication. *The Accursed Share* would be entirely rewritten before publication in 1949. *Julie*, *The Dead Man*, and *The Tomb of Louis XXX* were abandoned. One can only speculate on the reasons that may have motivated this withholding. Did the texts not meet some standard of perfectionism? Were they simply unfinished? Was it ultimately easier to walk away from them to start something new? Given the deeply personal nature of some of these writings—derived from experiences and thoughts chronicled in the diaries—we can nevertheless wonder whether the materials were simply too intimate for public consumption. There is a deep irony here, however, if that is the case; if, in other words, a diary of events—however reticent—could somehow be more acceptable for public consumption than a fictionalization of those same motifs.

As deeply personal as many of these pages are, they are also, as noted above, profoundly political, though in a paradoxical way. In the preface, Bataille tells us: “I wrote hoping my book would appear, if possible, on the occasion of the centenary of Nietzsche’s birth (15 October 1844). I wrote from February to August, hoping that the German retreat would make publication possible.” Five years previously, Bataille had published the final issue of the journal *Acéphale*, of which he was the sole author, in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Nietzsche’s descent into madness.³ Six years later, he would propose reissuing *On Nietzsche* for the fiftieth anniversary of Nietzsche’s death on August 25, 1900.⁴ Birth, madness, death, key moments in Nietzsche’s experience, become points of rumination and celebration for Bataille.

To write about Nietzsche—under the sign of Nietzsche—in Nazi-occupied France without writing as if Nietzsche were a fascist philosopher; intentionally, in fact, as Bataille says here in the Appendix, so that he might “be cleansed of the stain of Nazism”—this was in its way an act of war quite distinct from writing, for example, antiwar or anti-Nazi propaganda. Nevertheless, *On Nietzsche* was written expressly as forbidden literature, and it would be to miss an essential element of the book if one did not read it in that light, or rather, shifting metaphors, under that weight—the weight of wartime, of occupation, and of those symbols of apotheosis of the Nazi regime, the concentration and death camps.

Bataille had of course been writing about or under the influence of Nietzsche for many years, though not always as explicitly as might be expected.⁵ His first encounter with Nietzsche's work, most likely excerpts from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* included in a textbook for the *baccalauréat* in philosophy he completed in 1917, had come when Bataille was still a believer. Years later, he looked back on the era: "I was struck and I resisted. But when I read *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1922, I had changed so much that I believed I read what I might have been able to say—if at least . . . I wasn't very vain: I simply thought I no longer had a reason to write. What I had thought (in my way, certainly very vague) was said, it was withering."⁶ Another time he would simply say the encounter was "decisive"⁷ or laconically claim: "it gave me the impression that there was nothing else to say."⁸ In short, after Nietzsche, why write? (Maurice Blanchot would reflect similar sentiments in writing after the death of Bataille himself: "The very forceful expressions that Georges Bataille is allowed to employ belong to him, and under his authority they retain their measure; but should we happen to speak after him of despair, of horror, of ecstasy, of transport, we can only experience our own awkwardness—even more, our lies and falsification."⁹)

As it happens, Bataille's first publication following his encounter with Nietzsche was not a volume of his own writing but a translation, or rather a co-translation, of a book about Nietzsche by the Russian émigré philosopher Lev Shestov, *L'Idee de bien chez Tolstoï et Nietzsche* (The Idea of the Good in Tolstoy and Nietzsche).¹⁰ A generation older than Bataille and already internationally known, Shestov had become something of a mentor to the younger man, encouraging if not directing readings in philosophy and literature—Plato, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky as well as Nietzsche. Shestov's anti-idealist interpretation of Nietzsche—imbued with tragedy and moral concerns—would deeply shape the direction of Bataille's own thought. However, the difference in their bearings and temperaments at that time discouraged the continuation of the relationship. "Twenty or more years ago," Bataille would remember in the notes to this volume, "I often visited an old, Russian philosopher, Lev Shestov. He disconcerted me with his humorlessness. I was joyful, provocative, and consequently, failed to conceive of the profound seriousness that benefits from insolence and laughter."¹¹

Thereafter, though Nietzsche would remain a crucial reference for Bataille's thought and conversation, notably in his friendships with André Masson and the group of Surrealists who congregated around his studio on the rue Blomet, Nietzsche would recede as a direct referent in

Bataille's writing through the late 1920s and early 1930s, the periods of both *Documents* and *La Critique Sociale*. As an exception to this absence, written around 1930, Bataille's article "The 'Old Mole' and the Prefix *Sur* in the Words *Surhomme* [superman or overman] and *Surrealist*" contrasts a Nietzschean mode of cultural critique, a view from above—the *sur* in *surhomme* meaning "on" or "over" in French; as he would later say, a view from the summit—and the idealist mode of André Breton's faction in the Surrealist group; both with his own thoughts on base materialism. The piece is thus not uncritically or unabashedly Nietzschean, and, in any case, it ultimately went unpublished during his lifetime.¹²

Bataille's record of borrowings from the Bibliothèque Nationale confirms the relative distance from Nietzsche's thought during this period: he borrowed a number of books, including some in German during the period from 1922 to 1924, but only one book about Nietzsche between 1924 and 1933. This pattern changed profoundly in May 1936, when he turned to a deep engagement with Nietzsche's works, borrowing sixteen books by or about Nietzsche from May to the end of that year alone.¹³ This renewed interest can be linked directly to the inception of *Acéphale*, the foundational document of which—Bataille's essay "The Sacred Conspiracy"—is dated from Masson's house in Tossa, Spain, April 29, 1936.¹⁴

Stepping back slightly, we can say that in some ways the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche—betrayal is not too strong a word; Blanchot put it even more forcefully: "Nietzsche had been delivered over to lies"¹⁵—brought his influence out of the shadows in Bataille's thought and writing. Bataille's overt militancy against fascism in general and Nazi fascism in particular went public in 1933, coincident with Hitler's rise to power, when his article "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" appeared in the pages of *La Critique Sociale*, the journal of the Democratic Communist Circle.¹⁶ Thereafter, over the next two years, following the collapse of the Circle and *La Critique Sociale*, Bataille reassembled some members of the group with, surprisingly, some of the Surrealists into an unstable new union, *Contre-Attaque* (Counter Attack), which was, as he, Jean Dautry, and Pierre Kaan wrote on an invitational card, "radically opposed to fascist aggression, hostile without reserve to Bourgeois domination, [and] unable to have confidence in communism any longer."¹⁷ But Counter Attack was too volatile an ensemble to last beyond the publication of a single issue of its proposed series of *Cahiers*, the publication of which was greeted by a denunciatory note to the press, penned by several of the Surrealists who had collaborated on the project, which claimed, among other things, that the group "manifested

tendencies said to be ‘*sur-fascist*,’ whose purely fascist nature has shown itself to be more and more flagrant.”¹⁸

The precise origin and intended meaning of the term “surfascism” remain in dispute. Henri Dubief attributes it to Jean Dautry as wordplay modeled on “Surrealism.” Pierre Andler has also claimed responsibility for it, and we encounter the term in a note on fascism he wrote in April 1936: “Just as fascism is only a definitive surmarxism, a Marxism put back on its feet, similarly the power that will reduce it can only be a surfascism. Fascism does not refer to itself as surmarxism, since it is called fascism. Similarly, surfascism will not refer to itself as surfascism. It is not forbidden to seek the name that surfascism will bear tomorrow.”¹⁹ Henri Pastoureau, for his part, claimed in a letter to scholar Marina Galletti that “the word *surfascism* had been invented by the Surrealists. It can designate both a surpassed fascism (positive) or an exacerbated fascism (negative).”²⁰ As a charge leveled against Counter Attack by the Surrealist group, the term is clearly intended negatively, as an assertion that Bataille and his other collaborators—including Georges Ambrosino and Pierre Klossowski, among others—were “more fascist than the fascists.” There was more than a little truth to the accusation, and intentionally so. In a letter to Pierre Kaan written in February 1934, during the planning stages of Counter Attack, Bataille had said explicitly: “I have not doubt as to the level on which we must place ourselves: it can only be that of fascism itself, which is to say on the mythological level.”²¹

Two and a half years later, following the dissolution of Counter Attack and the accusation of *sur-fascism*, the headless figure of *Acéphale* would be born, first as a notional figure in a drawing by André Masson and in Bataille’s essay “The Sacred Conspiracy,” then, later that summer, as a guiding emblem of the journal bearing that title—with the subtitle “Religion, Sociology, Philosophy”—and as a “moral community” in the form of a secret society under that name.²² Published in January 1937, the second issue of *Acéphale* took as its topic “Nietzsche and the Fascists: A Reparation.” The third issue, “Dionysus,” published in July 1937, was devoted to the Nietzschean god. The final issue, published two years later, on the eve of war, began, as noted above, with a text memorializing Nietzsche’s descent into madness and ended with Bataille’s “Heraclitean Meditation.”

The accusation of surfascism, in the very thick of his militancy *against* fascism, seems to have been just the provocation that would push Bataille not only to manifest his Nietzscheanism overtly but also to give it a central place in his political program moving forward. As he wrote to Roger Caillois

weeks before the war began: “My insistence on claiming Nietzsche for myself alone indicates the direction I’m going.”²³ The nature and continuity of this concern is my point here. Despite the chaos of the era and the apparent chaos of the texts, from the accusation of *sur-fascism* in 1936 to the writing of *Sur Nietzsche* in 1944, Bataille’s thought betrays a profound, though not seamless, continuity. In the appendix to *On Nietzsche*, he even reprints portions of the *Acéphale* issue on Nietzsche and the Fascists.

Bataille’s Promethean push, in both *Acéphale* and *On Nietzsche*, would be to steal some fire from the Nazis—to steal Nietzsche back from them by demonstrating that he was neither bourgeois nor nationalist nor an anti-Semite. In the preface to *On Nietzsche*, Bataille would underestimate the point: “Today it seems that I must say: those who read or admire Nietzsche ridicule him (he knew it, he said it).” The remark echoes one made in the novel *Blue of Noon* (written in 1935) about people who claim to admire the Marquis de Sade: “People who admire Sade are con artists, do you hear? Con artists!”²⁴ In the novel, the accusation is made explicit: How many of Sade’s admirers were willing to follow his dictates with their lives? “Do any of them eat shit? Yes or no?”²⁵ In the novel, Sade’s admirers go unnamed but the remarks seem all but certainly directed at the Surrealists, not least because they—André Breton in particular—had been the butt of a previous (unpublished) assault bent by Bataille across the corpus of the Divine Marquis, “The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade.”²⁶

In *On Nietzsche*, though, the target of the attack is obviously readers and admirers of Nietzsche among the Nazis, rather than any other individual or group of Nietzsche’s readers. And indeed it must be remembered that Nietzsche was not without other admirers in France. André Gide evidenced his influence a generation earlier with his novel *The Immoralist* (1902). Albert Camus and René Char were each profoundly marked by Nietzsche’s work. And of course, while Nietzsche was crucial to Bataille, he became a shared, even *communal*, reference for Bataille and his closest collaborators in *Acéphale* and beyond, Klossowski and later Blanchot undoubtedly foremost among them.²⁷

Nietzsche himself voiced a paradoxical concern for the problems of recognition and understanding in the legacy of his thought. In *Ecce Homo*, he lamented: “I only need to speak with one of the ‘educated’ who came to the Upper Engadine for the summer and I am convinced that I do *not* live. Under these circumstances I have a duty against which my habits, even more the pride of my instincts, revolt at bottom—namely, to say: *Hear me! For I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone else.*”²⁸ Thus the paradoxical concern that his work be known among the educated

classes, combined with the reluctance to write in such a straightforward way that it might be. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he observed: “Every profound thinker is more afraid of being understood than of being misunderstood.”²⁹ To claim to fully understand a writer is to betray that writer; it is to set limits on the multiple meanings dormant in the works. Nietzsche’s observation—“I do not live”—can itself be understood in multiple ways: as a claim that his work is simply *unknown* or, conversely, as a claim that his work is *known* but known only in one way (as the work of the philosopher of the death of God, for example). For the work to be *living* it must live as a multiplicity, as the proliferation of multiple meanings, some of which will undoubtedly be inaccurate. In a response to Jean-Paul Sartre’s review of *Inner Experience* that Bataille included in *On Nietzsche* among the appendices, he echoed Nietzsche’s thought on this point: “each book is also the sum of the misunderstandings that it occasions.”

All of this is to say that Bataille’s political purpose in *On Nietzsche* is a curious one, both obvious and obtuse. The work clearly and directly continues his prewar antifascist activism but by decidedly different means. Bataille summarized the shift in his life and thought reticently in *Inner Experience*: “The war put an end to my ‘activity’ and my life became all the less separated from the object of its search.”³⁰ Rather than foregrounding his direct attack on the Nazi reading of Nietzsche in *On Nietzsche*, Bataille relegated it to a short text in the appendix. The bulk of the text would pursue a completely different path. That path, however, was not at all inappropriate to its ostensible subject. From a draft for an article titled “Is Nietzsche Fascist?” (included here in notes to the appendix), Bataille observes on the subject of Nietzsche’s political views: “The truth is that Nietzsche’s area of thought is situated beyond the necessary and common concerns that decide politics. The questions that he posed touch on tragedy, laughter, suffering, and the enjoyment of suffering, wealth and the freedom of the mind: in general the extreme states the human mind can reach.” In the preface, he is still more precise: “Above all he [Nietzsche] had no political position: he refused, when asked, to choose one party or another; irritated to be identified with either the right or the left. He was horrified by the idea of subordinating his thought to a cause.” Nietzsche’s politics, in other words, were neither right nor left, neither conservative nor progressive; they were, if anything, characterized by a refusal of subordination to any institution or cause, whether of blood, class, civil code, or religion. This is a politics of no politics, a move to transcend the political sphere. Later, Bataille would use a striking phrase to describe such a negative community: “the community of those who have no community.”³¹

In *Acéphale*, Bataille quoted Kierkegaard with apparent approval: “What looks like politics, and imagines itself to be political, will one day unmask itself as a religious movement.”³² *Acéphale* itself had been, as Bataille noted later, an attempt “if not to found a religion, at least to direct [himself] toward that goal . . . The beginning of the war made decidedly tangible the insignificance of the attempt in question.”³³ *On Nietzsche*, then, is directly political in its attempt to reclaim Nietzsche from the Nazis and yet simultaneously all but apolitical in its attempt to relocate the discussion of Nietzsche outside that of politics and alongside that of life. Indeed, at every turn, the book confronts its own ideas, whether those of Nietzsche, Bataille himself, or from some other source, with the test of life itself. In the preface, Bataille made this plain: “I began with a theoretical statement of the problem (this is Part Two), but this short presentation is fundamentally only a narrative of a lived experience: of an experience lived for twenty years, charged throughout with fear.”

The “theoretical statement of the problem” is the text of a lecture on morality that Bataille delivered at his friend Marcel Moré’s house on March 5, 1944. Published later and in a different form as a “Discussion on Sin,” the event was part of a series of lectures hosted by Moré during the war years.³⁴ Bataille and Moré began planning the event during the fall of 1943. The other participants included an astonishing array of significant writers, philosophers, and theologians, among them Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Hyppolite, Maurice de Gandillac, Jean Paulhan, Pierre Prévost, Gabriel Marcel, Arthur Adamov, Michel Leiris, Maurice Blanchot, and Reverend Fathers Henri Dubarle, Augustin Maydieu, and Jean Daniélou, the last of whom responded to Bataille’s lecture with a prepared piece. Pierre Klossowski facilitated the publication of his notes on the lecture and a transcript of the discussion that followed in the Catholic journal of philosophical theology, *Dieu Vivant*, in 1945.

The lecture took place only months after the publication of Jean-Paul Sartre’s extended, caustic review of *Inner Experience* and only weeks after the publication of Bataille’s book *Guilty*, but Bataille did not directly reference the book or respond directly to Sartre. Instead, he sketched contrasting views of two types of morality: a morality of the summit, which is to say of ecstatic, peak experiences; and a morality of decline, essentially encompassing all other types of experiences. He envisioned summit morality as sovereign, unencumbered, and free, and the morality of decline as opposed to it, not only as an active force of resistance but also as an inevitable outcome of the failure, exhaustion, or collapse of sovereignty. Sovereignty requires energy and is its release.³⁵

For my purposes here, it is significant to note that even in the discussion following his lecture, Bataille's audience made repeated note of the relationship between his thought and his life, as well as between his ideas and his mode of expressing them. Maurice de Gandillac, for example, remarked: "I wouldn't want to ask you an indiscreet question, but I feel more at ease with you now, because we've all been convinced by your tone. As [Arthur] Adamov was saying, if there were those among us who might occasionally doubt the profoundly authentic character of your experience and of your whole book, this suspicion has absolutely been dispelled by the tone even of our conversation."³⁶ Jean Hyppolite noted Bataille's "inner sincerity."³⁷ Arthur Adamov observed: "It is very rare, in our day, to simply hear a man speak with an intonation that is truly his own, that conveys a personal message."³⁸ Skeptical before his thought, Bataille's listeners were convinced by his intonation, his sincerity, his way of being in the world. Writing *On Nietzsche* in the months following the lecture, Bataille would take these observations on as a strategy and a style, as rules for writing: "I could only write *with my life* this book projected to be on Nietzsche, in which I wanted to propose, if I could, to resolve the intimate problem of morality."

By proposing to write *with his life* a book on Nietzsche, Bataille is proposing a profound and alluring paradox. The paradox begs us to question the relationship not only between two individuals, between their lives and bodies of thought, but also between thought and life, more generally. How is it possible to write about someone else's experience? In more explicitly Nietzschean terms, how can one share the perspective of another? How might one take on the words of another as his or her own? In notes for *On Nietzsche*, Bataille asks: "What do I know about Mr. Nietzsche? . . . What do we still have in common?" Throughout the book, Bataille simultaneously proclaims his community with Nietzsche and notes the profound gulf that separates them. This acknowledgement is an acknowledgement that derives from basic biological difference, fundamental distinction: you are not I. Despite profound bonds of friendship and understanding, there are limits to what we can know about one another, and limits to the nature and form of communication. The exploration of these limits is the purpose of Bataille's writing, as it was, among other things, for Nietzsche. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche wondered, in words that could very well be Bataille's: "What, in the end, is common? . . . To understand one another it is not enough that one use the same words; one also has to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences; in the end one has to have one's experience in *common*."³⁹

On Nietzsche is on *Nietzsche* precisely because Nietzsche has opened and occupies this space of friendship and commonality. As Bataille says, “Nietzsche alone offers me his solidarity—saying *we*. If *community* doesn’t exist, Mr. Nietzsche is a philosopher.” His book is predicated on the possibility of friendship, the possibility of community that Nietzsche’s work embodies. The possibility is predicated on a reading that does not limit Nietzsche to any one mode of interpretation or discourse of understanding, including the discourse of philosophy. In another short essay on Nietzsche, an introduction to an edition of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* published by the Club du Meilleur Livre, Bataille is explicit about his views on the relationship between *Zarathustra* in particular and the discourse of philosophy: “*Zarathustra* is not a book of philosophy and moreover there can be no other philosophy in it but one of play. . . . In fact, *Zarathustra* puts in question everything that founds the human order and the system of our thoughts.”⁴⁰ *Zarathustra*, in other words, cannot be subordinated to any one discourse of understanding, philosophical or otherwise.

Consistent with this view, and in extension of it, Bataille does not read Nietzsche in order to extract and apply his concepts. Indeed, he brushes those concepts aside. In *On Nietzsche*, he goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche’s core doctrines cannot be followed, that they don’t lead to anything. Bataille dismisses the Overman, the Eternal Return, and Will to Power (which he reads as a political concept). Bataille writes about Nietzsche *with his life*, and his principle interest is in Nietzsche’s own life, rather than his thought, not merely as a body of unique biographical facts, but as an organization of and search for experiences. If anything, Bataille sees Nietzsche’s thought as caught in an impasse without an outlet. Taking his cue from Zarathustra’s suggestion that the disciple must learn to renounce his master, Bataille outlines a goal for himself that will surpass Nietzsche’s limitations. *On Nietzsche* is an attempt to surpass the politicized Nazi betrayal of Nietzsche, but beyond that it is also in some ways an attempt to surpass Nietzsche himself, an attempt to develop the core of Nietzsche’s work beyond Nietzsche’s own development of it: *On Nietzsche* then attempts to move over Nietzsche or beyond him, an attempt to be more Nietzschean than Nietzsche.

Toward this end, perhaps ironically, but with inevitability, Bataille reads Nietzsche selectively, a selection that becomes literal in *Memorandum*, which is simply an assemblage of quotations. Which Nietzsche did Bataille read? In *On Nietzsche* and *Memorandum*, he quotes from *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy*

of *Morals*, *Ecce Homo*, and *The Will to Power*. Almost one-third of the quotations in *Memorandum* derive from *The Will to Power*. The section titles in *Memorandum*, Essential Features, Morality, Politics, and Mystical States, give us another sense of Bataille's selective interest in Nietzsche. The Nietzsche that emerges is a collection of metaphors and a way of writing—a stylized relationship between writing and life, of writing for life and as life. This in mind, it is undoubtedly significant that Bataille—intentionally or unintentionally—commingles many of Nietzsche's styles. The fabulist of *Zarathustra* appears alongside the aphorist of *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Aphorisms are occasionally culled from the essays of *On the Genealogy of Morals* and the autobiographical *Ecce Homo*. Notes and unfinished pieces from *The Will to Power* are intermixed throughout.

Notably in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche himself sets a precedent for this kind of discursive heterogeneity: the book commingles aphoristic sentences with short essays, some of which take the form of parables, as in the case of §125, “The Madman.” The last section of book four is the beginning of *Zarathustra*. And the second edition of the book includes a prelude of rhymes and an appendix of songs. The book spills open, points beyond itself.

Nevertheless, the practice of reading Nietzsche without apparent discrimination, without attention to the discursive forms and modes of his writings, remains both challenging and common. It need hardly be remarked that distinct discursive forms and registers serve distinct purposes. Fictions, fables, essays, lectures, diaries, poems, and notes all function in epistemologically distinct ways. Each genre places different demands upon its readers' assumptions and reading practices.

This is perhaps most challenging when encountered in the notes and drafts left by a writer, as in Nietzsche's *Will to Power* and Bataille's notes and drafts collected in the notes to this volume. Some of these notes may have been written *toward* truth or fiction, in accordance with the etymological meaning of the word essay, which is to say as *attempts* to capture a thought or provoke an experience in the reader. The writer is not always the best judge of his or her own work, and some of these attempts might be closer to the mark for some readers than are the published versions of the thoughts. Other notes and drafts function in different ways entirely, presenting other forms of interest. As a general rule, however, reading such materials begs the immediate question, suggested above: Why didn't the writer publish the text in question? Was it too awkward? Too false, a failed attempt to capture something that remained elusive? Or possibly, as is often the case in Bataille's notes to these writings, too direct, too true?

Already in *Inner Experience* Bataille had begun to incorporate extended quotations from Nietzsche's work in his own, sometimes as more or less traditional quotations, but often in a dramatic mode of overt identification.⁴¹ Following an epigram from *Zarathustra*, the text begins with a claim: "How I would like to say of my book the same thing that Nietzsche did of *The Gay Science* . . ."⁴² By the end of the book, however, Bataille writes, in delirious overidentification: "If I have known how to create the silence of others within myself, *I am*, myself, Dionysus, *I am* the crucified."⁴³ Denis Hollier aptly summarized Bataille's approach in the text: "Bataille speaks of Hegel; he becomes Nietzsche's madman."⁴⁴

Though less fevered, *On Nietzsche* begins with this impossible identification as its first premise. Bataille observes: "The difficulties that Nietzsche encountered—letting go of God and the good, yet nevertheless burning with the ardor of those who died for God or the good—I have encountered them in my turn. The discouraging solitude that he described exhausts me. But breaking with moral entities gives the air I breathe a truth so great that I'd rather live as a cripple or die than fall back into servitude." When Bataille quotes Daniel Halévy's life of Nietzsche in part 1 of *On Nietzsche*, the quotations are pertinent not only to Nietzsche's life but also to Bataille's own. Very occasionally, Bataille's language and syntax leave distinct doubt as to the identity of the individual in question in a given sentence. At one point, Bataille observes, following a quotation from Nietzsche, "It's a dazzled man who speaks," but the dazzled man might be Nietzsche speaking in the quotation or himself, Bataille, dazzled by the quotation.

At the surface level of his language, Bataille borrows a body of words and metaphors, including topographic ones, from Nietzsche. The terrain of his thought is Nietzsche's: a realm of summits and peaks, of ascent and decline. Decline, for Bataille, is proximate to falling and to *the fall*, whether through simple exhaustion or sin. Decline is also proximate to descent, to going down or going under, to the *untergehen* of Zarathustra. For Bataille, as for Nietzsche, every word is a mask, a hideout. To write is both to reveal and to revel in this phenomenon, to raise questions about language itself, to open language as a space of reference and suspension—a theater of the word that is a tragic theater, wherein the meaning of words is at stake, the victim of a sacrifice. Bataille backs language into a corner, splits words, playing with their roots and affiliations, denotations and connotations. He multiplies the referents for his words, resulting in a tragic suspension of certitude through doubling and duplicity. He effects this laceration of language in the words themselves—through puns and wordplays, double meanings, at once overdetermined and ambiguous language, tragic doublespeak—and

through textual assemblage, the accelerated juxtaposition of genres, tones, and registers.

Key terms in Bataille's lexicon proliferate in adjacent and cognate terms. He has many words for chance, randomness, and the unexpected—*chance*, *hazard*, *aléa*—and many ways of using these words. He pushes the meaning of words to limits—*jeu*—in particular is often at once play, gambling, and risk. Wounds are *plaies* and *blessures*. *Vide* is void, by turns noun, verb, and adjective: to void the void void. But *vide* is also emptiness: to empty the most empty emptiness. Emptiness recalls the Buddhist texts that Bataille was reading while writing portions of this book, while void remains arguably closer to its Catholic progenitor, Pascal. There are also nuances in these proximities, as in the case of words like abyss and void: *abîme*, *vide*; *l'abîme le plus vide*—the emptiest abyss. Bataille writes with a hammer of descriptive insistence.

Occasionally these issues open directly onto problems of translation. *Ciel* references the sky but also, for Christians, heaven; sky as a material reality, heaven as a spiritual one. Though Catholicism profoundly marked Bataille's thought, I have consistently rendered *ciel* materially. When Bataille writes, as he does here: "My passion for love opens on death like a window on a courtyard," his passion for love or loving—*aimer*—almost certainly refers to a passion for making love, for physical love, and eroticism, though the term can be cast toward more chaste cases. At the other end of the emotional spectrum, *angoisse* here can be anguish but also anxiety and, following French translations of Kierkegaard back into English, as dread. As is obvious from these examples, this syntactical and semantic complexity poses challenges to translation. I've tried to respect the poetic and literary quality of the text, as well as the philosophical and religious origins of its vocabulary, at the occasional expense of strict consistency. Translation itself describes a tragic encounter with texts: meaning is inevitably lost, sense and syntax betrayed. The translator's hope is that the translated text, the double, will be at least as real as the original, while fearing—indeed knowing—that it is its shadow.

Bataille's strategy, in sum, is dramatic and explicitly fictional. He stages his encounter with Nietzsche by borrowing forms and figures, specific words and metaphors, as well as effects. As he says in *On Nietzsche*, "making use of fictions, I dramatize being: I lacerate solitude and in the laceration, I communicate." Bataille recounts stories from his life *as if* they were fictional and in such a style as to cast them into a fictional frame, to imbue them with tragic uncertainty. "In the first part of this diary, I tried to describe this

state, which conceals itself as much as possible from aesthetic description.” “Conceal” here is *se dérober*—to elude or slip away, but also to conceal, as in the concealment of a face or a secret. “Everything with a manifest face also possesses a hidden one,” he wrote during these same months in *Alleluia: The Catechism of Dianus*.⁴⁵

When he was a young man, Bataille wanted to write a novel in the style of Proust. Portions of *Inner Experience*, *Guilty* and *On Nietzsche* all but fulfill that ambition, containing passages written, like Nietzsche’s works, as if posthumously; extracting and amplifying experiences from daily life that become supersaturated with meaning and haunted by its absence. These works are Bataille’s *In Search of Lost Time*, as well as his *Phenomenology of Mind* and *Zarathustra* rolled into one. They are also his *Season in Hell*. But the key to Bataille’s engagement with Nietzsche is fiction, falsehood, the view of truth as an army of metaphors. Bataille’s “identification” of Nietzsche with the madman and with Dionysus, as well as his conflation of Nietzsche’s strategies of writing—philosophy, poetry, parables, notes—is predicated not on a “true” misrecognition, but on the absence of truth, of truth in the service of experience.

Needless to say, readers expecting a carefully reasoned, tightly argued, exegetical book *about* Nietzsche will be disappointed. And in any case, if Nietzsche is correct, and all truths are only interpretations, provisional perspectives on experience, then it is undoubtedly foolish to read Nietzsche for his truths, foolish to analyze and interpret his writing for the truths it contains, foolish to attempt to extract from his writing ideas and arguments that might be applied elsewhere, in other contexts, or, at least, foolish to take those ideas and arguments more seriously than Nietzsche himself did, which is to say to become committed to them.

Bataille’s engagement with Nietzsche is fundamentally theatrical, a play of masks; doubles doubling one another down a hall of mirrors; a case of mistaken identities: it would be comic were it not also possibly one of life squandered, life spent wandering between identities, indeed among all the names of the world. This is also to say that Bataille’s Nietzsche is not a philosopher of *will* in the sense of self-preservation or, worse, the egotistical domination of others, but rather of will as expenditure, of will as loss. If Bataille mimics or repeats an experience from Nietzsche, it is the experience of delirious and ecstatic self-loss. He reads Nietzsche selectively but explicitly for this experience. Nietzsche, for Bataille, is the furthest thing from the egoist or the individualist he is often taken to be. For Nietzsche, man is something to be overcome; humanity is something to be overcome, a form worthy of transcendence; our very humanity is a habit worth breaking, the

fears bred into us through the evolutionary history of our species, the habits beaten into us by our families and social structures: these are the things to let go. In short, Nietzsche's corpus is not a hymn to himself but a hymn to self-transcendence, self-loss. But let us leave Mr. Nietzsche.

This strategy of heterogeneous textual assemblage as dramatic meditation reaches a high point in *Memorandum*, wherein Bataille all but entirely disappears behind the mask of quotations. "I propose this book for long, slow meditations," it begins. The project has its origins in the secret society Acéphale, in which members—Henri Dussat and Bataille in particular—generated a series of "meditations," culminating in those of Bataille's "The Practice of Joy before Death."⁴⁶ Nietzsche's writings provided themes and texts for these meditations as well. At a meeting of the group in July 1937, Bataille proposed assembling a collection of selected texts by Nietzsche under the title *Memorandum*.⁴⁷

Memorandum also has precedents in edited selections, collections, and anthologies of many kinds. The Würzbach edition of *The Will to Power* itself is easily recognizable as a selected and heavily edited assemblage of Nietzsche's notes and drafts. Judging by the number of quotations from that work in *Memorandum*—particularly volume 2, first published in France in 1937⁴⁸—Bataille clearly was undeterred by the potential problems of editing and assembling writings by someone else, in both cases Nietzsche, toward particular ends. Indeed to the contrary, whereas Nietzsche's sister and other editors—to the later pleasure of his Nazi interpreters—collated notes and drafts under the title *The Will to Power* to assemble a "complete" philosophy, a "book" in the classical sense of apparent clarity, orderly organization, progression, and closure: Bataille did the precise opposite. *Memorandum* undoes *The Will to Power* without dismissing it, reorients the materials toward new purposes that are themselves indistinct from purposelessness, which is to say as meditations.

Though the residue of this project can clearly be seen in "The Practice of Joy before Death" and the abortive *Manuel de l'Anti-Chrétien* (Anti-Christian Handbook), no *Memorandum* from Acéphale has survived.⁴⁹ However, seven years later, in 1944, as Bataille prepared *On Nietzsche* for publication, he invited Michel Leiris to a small gathering—Maurice Blanchot, Raymond Queneau, Leiris, a few others—at his apartment in Paris at which he planned to read a short text related to the text that would be published as *Memorandum* in honor of Nietzsche's centenary. "The only question (in any case for me)," he wrote to Leiris, "is to know if a non-Christian spiritual life is possible and what it might be."⁵⁰ This

sentiment directly echoed one of the foundational concerns of Acéphale, proposed by Georges Ambrosino and Bataille as a question to Pierre Andler, and undoubtedly others, in 1938: “What does religious experience mean to you? Is it what you want for yourself? To what degree? And in what way?”⁵¹

Gathered alongside and in the wake of writing *On Nietzsche*, and sharing a number of the same quotations, *Memorandum* proposes a kind of Nietzschean meditation that might lead to the life chronicled in *On Nietzsche*. The two texts thus form a kind of diptych, at once distinct and closely related, parallel even. Though published by Gallimard in April 1945, two months after *On Nietzsche*, in its origins, *Memorandum* precedes the other book both logically and chronologically. As a book of meditations, though, *Memorandum* is also closely related to the text Bataille wrote immediately after assembling it, *Method of Meditation*.

Why did Bataille stop writing the type of intimate, diaristic prose that characterizes so much of *Inner Experience*, *Guilty*, and *On Nietzsche*? A first answer is that he didn’t, at least not immediately. After *On Nietzsche*, Bataille continued to write journals, but they were cast explicitly as fictional. *Histoire de Rats* (The Story of Rats) and *Dianus* in *L’Impossible* (The Impossible) are fictions in this form, and at the heart of his novel *L’Abbé C.* is “The Diary of Chianine,” the purported diary of its protagonist.

At the same time, already here in the notes to the appendix, Bataille will admit that he would prefer to write in a more straightforward manner: “One day I will show, precisely when I come out of this vagueness, this incoherence, that I can proceed otherwise.” In the drafts for the “Philosophical Epilogue,” one can witness Bataille struggling to put his thoughts into a more sustained and coherent, persuasively argumentative order. He seems to have written—or rather attempted to write, then abandoned—the “Philosophical Epilogue” during the early fall of 1944. The text includes themes, motifs, and even passages that will resurface in *Method of Meditation*, written from April 1945 through early 1946, published by Éditions Fontaines in 1947 and reprinted as an appendix to the second edition of *Inner Experience* in 1954.⁵² *Method of Meditation*, then, can be read as a direct extension or perhaps distillate of both *On Nietzsche* and, as a book of meditations, *Memorandum*. But the abandoned epilogue also includes themes central to fictional writings from the period and later—notably the theme of the double or twin, explored in *Scissiparity* and *L’Abbé C.*, among other works—and, beyond that, the problem of the continuum as it relates to that of the sacred and the profane, a theme explored most fully in condensed expository prose in *Theory of Religion*, written in 1948.

All in all, the years immediately following the publication of *On Nietzsche* witness Bataille's gradual abandonment of this style and strategy of writing. In that sense, *Inner Experience*, *Guilty*, and *On Nietzsche*, and the texts directly related to them, do stand decidedly apart in Bataille's oeuvre as being of a piece, however heterogeneous and disorienting that place may be. The combination of theoretical speculation and dense metaphor found in Bataille's early writing, delirious and highly combustible as it was, would give way, across the tragic prose of these three volumes, to a more straightforward, if no less intellectually challenging, style. Perhaps the definitive turn was an ironic one, when in 1950 Bataille proposed that these books be reissued as part of a multivolume assemblage. The mere fact that he might have to reissue and thereby reexamine the works suggests that they were in some sense no longer current.

The multivolume series Bataille proposed to Gallimard in 1950 took the collective title *La Somme athéologique* (The Atheological Summa or Summa Atheologica), and *On Nietzsche* had a prominent place in the project as the principal text in a larger textual assemblage with a new title, *Le Monde nietzschéen d'Hiroshima* (The Nietzschean World of Hiroshima). The book would be the second volume in the series, following a new edition of *Inner Experience* and preceding a volume titled *L'Amitié* (Friendship), wherein *Guilty* was to be the central text.

The proposed volume was to include *On Nietzsche*, *Memorandum*, and a new text on Nietzsche and Hiroshima providing the title for the volume as a whole. Bataille claimed to be "in the process of finishing" that text, though no manuscript under that specific title was found among his papers at the time of his death.⁵³ Undoubtedly the text would have had some relationship to the topics presented in Bataille's article, "A propos des récits des habitants d'Hiroshima."⁵⁴

Another early outline for *La Somme* proposed including *On Nietzsche* in a volume titled *La Mort de Nietzsche* (Nietzsche's Death) composed of four parts: *Comment Nietzsche est-il Mort* (How Nietzsche Died), *On Nietzsche*, *La Sainteté du Mal* (The Sanctity of Evil), and *Memorandum*. As with *The Nietzschean World of Hiroshima*, no manuscript exists for either *How Nietzsche Died* or *The Sanctity of Evil*. Outlines for the second of these titles do however exist, proposing a collection of essays on writers—Sade, Camus, Michelet, Baudelaire, and Simone Weil, among others—not unlike the volume Bataille later published as *Literature and Evil*.⁵⁵ Other outlines proposed *The Sanctity of Evil* as a volume devoted to the "necessity of an atheological community,"⁵⁶ affiliating the project with notes for a book on

Nietzsche and communism; Sade, Camus, and Nietzsche; and, ultimately, the notion of sovereignty. That volume became affiliated in Bataille's plans with outlines for his other great multivolume series, *The Accursed Share*. A draft version of volume 3 was published after his death under the title *Sovereignty*: it is substantially a text developing his thoughts on Nietzsche.⁵⁷ Reflections on Nietzsche thus occupy two distinct volumes in Bataille's two major series of books, the volumes of *La Somme Athéologique* and those of *The Accursed Share*.

As plans and outlines for the *La Somme* developed throughout the 1950s, *On Nietzsche* remained central to the project. When a second edition of *Inner Experience* was finally published in 1954, a paratextual note listed *On Nietzsche* as the third of five volumes in *La Somme Athéologique*. The other listed volumes were *Inner Experience*, *Guilty*, and two additional books, *Le Pur Bonheur* (Pure Happiness) and *Le Système inachevé du non-savoir* (The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge). Bataille published an essay in *Botteghe Oscure* XVII in 1958 under the title *Pure Happiness*,⁵⁸ and a second edition of *Guilty* appeared in 1961, but the second edition of *On Nietzsche* had not appeared by the time of his death in 1962.

Judging by the changes Bataille worked into the second editions of *Inner Experience* and *Guilty*, one might anticipate that the second edition of *On Nietzsche* would have involved a number of small editorial adjustments—minor changes of phrasing, spacing, and occasionally pace—as well as the addition of appended texts. A second edition of *Memorandum* was indicated along with the suggestion that Bataille would “reorganize . . . the personal parts” of that work.⁵⁹ But no more specific details of these potential editorial suggestions have surfaced. The inclusion of *Memorandum* in this edition of *On Nietzsche* finds its justification in Bataille’s editorial plans for the volume. The texts translated herein follow those published in Bataille’s *Oeuvres Complètes*.

In 1935, in the sole issue of the *Cahiers de Contre-Attaque*, Bataille’s friends and collaborators Georges Ambrosino and Georges Gilet proposed that “[t]he world that will be born tomorrow will be the world announced by Nietzsche, the world that will liquidate *all* moral servitude.”⁶⁰ Nearly a decade later, echoing this sentiment, Bataille believed he was writing at the “dawn of a new world,” as he describes it in the notes for *Memorandum*, at a turning point in moral history, and perhaps he was, but the changes he and others anticipated seem to have been far more grand and sweeping than those that came to pass. Seventy years later, life and thought remain profoundly fragmented. Rather than being overcome through the creative

play of identities and identifications, affiliations to class, nation, and religion—among other limiting forms of personal identification—have become all but hopelessly reified by the politics of our social institutions. Nietzsche meanwhile has become for many readers what Bataille feared: a philosopher, a writer sequestered in one part of the library. Bataille wrote *On Nietzsche* in part as at attempt to end that isolation, to drag Nietzsche into the street. And yet, toward the end of *On Nietzsche*, Bataille admits that it is sometimes painful to speak: “I *love* and it is my torture not to be figured out, to have to pronounce words—still sticky with lies, with the dregs of the times . . . So little am I addressing hostile readers that I require others to *figure me out*.” Bataille does not write to convince or persuade; he does not present arguments to be followed. He writes for the reader who will approach him as a friend in search of the singularity hidden behind his most common mask.

Notes

1. These texts are collected in Bataille, *Romans et Récits* (Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 2004). See also Bataille, *My Mother, Madame Edwarda, The Dead Man* (London: Marion Boyars, 1989); Bataille, *The Impossible* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991); and Bataille, *Louis XXX* (London: Equus, 2013).
2. On this, see in particular the notes to *Julie*, in Bataille, *Romans et Récits* (Paris: Gallimard, Editions de la Pléiade, 2004), pp. 483–8 and 1210.
3. See reprint of *Acéphale: Religion, Sociologie, Philosophie: 1936–1939* (Jean-Michel Place, 1995), n.p.; see also Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 545–58.
4. This is mentioned in the letter in which Bataille proposes *La Somme athéologique*, discussed below. See Bataille, *Choix de Lettres, 1917–1962*, ed. Michel Surya (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 409.
5. Bataille’s relationship to Nietzsche is among the most studied aspects of his oeuvre. Among many others, these studies include François Warin, *Nietzsche et Bataille: la parodie à l’infni* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994); Lionel Abel, “Georges Bataille and the Repetition of Nietzsche,” in Leslie A. Boldt-Irons, ed., *On Bataille: Critical Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 51–60; Jeremy Biles, “Nietzsche Slain,” in Biles, *Ecce Monstrum: Georges Bataille and the Sacrifice of Form* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), pp. 36–71; Denis Hollier, “From Beyond Hegel to Nietzsche’s Absence” in Boldt, ed., *On Bataille: A Critical Reader*, pp. 61–78; Denis Hollier, “Le Dispositif Hegel/Nietzsche dans la bibliothèque de Bataille,” *L’Arc* 38 (1969): 35–47; David Kilpatrick, “The Staging of Sacrifice in Bataille,” in Kilpatrick, *Writing with Blood* (EyeCorner Press, 2011), pp. 92–132; Bernard Sichère, “Le ‘Nietzsche’ de Georges Bataille,” *Stanford*

French Review 12:1 (Spring 1988): 13–30; Allan Stoekl, “From *Acéphale* to the Will to Chance,” *Glyph* 6 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Allen S. Weiss, “Impossible Sovereignty,” in Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Excess* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989) pp. 12–28; and Yue Zhou, “Bataille’s Nietzsche” in Ashley Woodward, ed. *Interpreting Nietzsche: Reception and Influence* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 35–50.

6. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 8, p. 640.
7. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 7, p. 459.
8. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 7, p. 615.
9. Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) p. 203.
10. Léon Chestov, *L’Idée de bien chez Tolstoï et Nietzsche*. Trans. T. Beresovski-Chestov and G. Bataille (Paris: Éditions du Siècle, 1925). English translation by Bernard Martin and Spencer E. Roberts in Lev Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969). Bataille co-translated the book from Russian with Shestov’s daughter. Since Bataille did not know Russian, it is likely that his role in the project was to complete and polish the work in French.
11. For additional information about Bataille’s friendship with Lev Shestov, see my *Georges Bataille* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), pp. 40–42.
12. See Bataille, *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 32–44.
13. See the lists of Bataille’s borrowings from the Bibliothèque Nationale by Jean-Pierre Le Bouler and Joëlle Bellec Martini in Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 12, pp. 551–621.
14. See Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, pp. 178–81.
15. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 136.
16. For an English translation, see Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, pp. 137–60.
17. Bataille, *L’Apprenti Sorcier*, ed. Marina Galletti (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1997), p. 125.
18. Quoted in Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 673.
19. Bataille, *L’Apprenti Sorcier*, p. 296.
20. Quoted in Bataille, *L’Apprenti Sorcier*, p. 297. See also p. 11.
21. Bataille, *L’Apprenti Sorcier*, p. 112.
22. See Bataille, *L’Apprenti Sorcier*, pp. 336–41, for a precise history of this development written by Bataille.
23. Letter to Roger Caillois dated 20 July 1939. Bataille, *Choix de lettres*, p. 167.
24. Bataille, *Blue of Noon*, trans. Harry Mathews (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 68.
25. Ibid.
26. See Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, pp. 91–102.
27. Nietzsche’s legacy in France is also well studied. Some comprehensive studies include Alan Schrift, *Nietzsche’s French Legacy* (London: Routledge, 1995); Douglas Smith, *Transvaluations: Nietzsche in France, 1872–1972* (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 1996); and Christopher Forth, *Zarathustra in Paris* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

28. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, preface, § 1, in Nietzsche, *The Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966).

29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 290 in Nietzsche, *The Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966).

30. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), p. 95.

31. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 281.

32. See Bataille, "The Sacred Conspiracy" in *Visions of Excess*, p. 178.

33. Georges Bataille, *Guilty*, trans. Stuart Kendall (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), p. 158.

34. See "Discussion on Sin," in Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, ed. Stuart Kendall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 26–74. See also "Discussions sur la Guerre" in *Digraphe* 17 (1978): pp. 121–39.

35. A detailed analysis of these concepts in Bataille's work falls outside the intended scope of this introduction.

36. See "Discussion on Sin," in Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, p. 70.

37. See "Discussion on Sin," in Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, p. 50.

38. See "Discussion on Sin," in Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, p. 44.

39. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* § 268 in Nietzsche, *The Basic Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966).

40. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, volume 12, p. 492, 493.

41. *Acéphale* nos. 3–4 also began with an extended group of quotations assembled in collage fashion.

42. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 3.

43. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 156.

44. Denis Hollier, "From Beyond Hegel to Nietzsche's Absence," in Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons, ed., *On Bataille* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 66.

45. Bataille, *Guilty*, p. 133.

46. See Bataille, *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, pp. 414 ff., 428 ff.

47. Bataille, *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, p. 441.

48. Bataille, *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, p. 449.

49. For the *Manuel de l'Anti-Chrétien*, see Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 377–399.

50. Bataille, *Choix de Lettres*, p. 233.

51. Bataille, *L'Apprenti Sorcier*, p. 455.

52. See Bataille, *Inner Experience*, pp. 169–202.
53. See letter to Raymond Queneau, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, p. 360.
54. *Critique* 8–9 (janvier–février 1947); reprinted in Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 11, pp. 172–87.
55. See Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, p. 361.
56. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 8, p. 639.
57. *Sovereignty* in Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vols. 2 and 3. Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991). On these topics, see also Stuart Kendall, “The Horror of Liberty,” in Andrew Mitchell and Jason Winfree, eds., *The Obsessions of Georges Bataille* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), pp. 47–63.
58. See “Pure Happiness” in Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, pp. 224–54.
59. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, p. 361.
60. Bataille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 392.

On Nietzsche

The Will to Chance

Enter Giovanni with a heart at the end of his dagger:

Giovanni: Be not amaz'd; if your misgiving hearts
Shrink at the idle sight, what bloodless fear
Of coward passion would have seized your senses,
Had you beheld the rape of life and beauty
Which I have acted!—My sister, oh my sister!

Florio: Ha! What of her?

Giovanni: The glory of my deed
Dark'ned the mid-day sun, made noon as night

Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

Preface

1

You would like to warm yourself against me? I advise you not to come too close: you might burn your hands. For look, I burn too much. I only just barely prevent my flame from bursting from my body.

1881–1886¹

What compels me to write—I think—is the fear of going mad. I suffer from a burning, painful longing that endures in me like an unsatisfied desire.

In one sense, my tension resembles a mad urge to laugh, hardly different from the passions from which Sade's heroes burned and yet close to those of martyrs or saints . . .

I have no doubt: this delirium draws out human qualities in me. But, it must be said, it leads to disequilibrium and deprives me, painfully, of rest. I burn and am disoriented and remain empty in the end. I can propose to myself grand and necessary actions, but none of them answers to my fever. I am speaking of moral concerns, of the search for an object whose value sweeps all others away!

Compared to the moral ends that are normally proposed, this object is incommensurable, in my eyes: these ends seem dull and deceptive. But it is precisely these moral ends that can be translated into actions (are they not determined as a demand for definite acts?).

It's true: concern for a limited end sometimes leads to the summit toward which I strive. But by a detour. The moral end is then distinct from the excess it occasions. Glorious states, sacred moments—which reveal the incommensurable—exceed intended results. Common morality places these results on the same level as the goals of sacrifice. A sacrifice explores the depth of worlds, and the destruction that ensures it thereby reveals the laceration. But sacrifice is celebrated for a banal reason. A morality always has some good for individual beings in sight.

(Things apparently changed the day that God was represented as a veritable, unique end. I don't doubt that some will say that the incommensurable of which I speak is, in short, only God's transcendence. However, God's transcendence is, for me, flight from my object. Nothing really changes if we think of human satisfaction in place of that of the celestial Being! God's person displaces and does not suppress the problem. It only introduces confusion: at will, when necessary, the being, as a kind of God, gives itself an incommensurable essence. No matter: *serving God, acting on his behalf*. God is reducible to the ordinary ends of action. *If God were situated beyond, we couldn't do anything for him.*)

2

The extreme, unconditional longing of humanity was expressed for the first time by Nietzsche *independently from a moral goal and from serving a God.*

Nietzsche could not define it precisely but it animated him; he took it on thoroughly. To burn without answering to some moral obligation, expressed in a dramatic tone, is undoubtedly a paradox. It is impossible, from there, to preach or to act. A disconcerting result arises from this. If we stop making one burning state the condition of another subsequent state, given as a graspable good, the proposed state seems a pure play of fulguration, an empty consummation. Lacking a relationship to some enrichment, like power or the growth of the state (or of a God, a Church, a party), this consummation is not even intelligible. *The positive value of loss can apparently only be given in terms of profit.*

Nietzsche was not clearly aware of this difficulty. He had to make note of his failure: in the end he knew that his was a voice in the wilderness. To suppress obligation, the *good*, to denounce the emptiness and the lie of morality, he destroyed the effective value of language. Fame came late, and when it came, he changed the stakes. No one responded to his expectations.

Today it seems that I must say: those who read or admire Nietzsche ridicule him (he knew it, he said it*). *Except for me?* (I am simplifying.) But to attempt, as he asked, to follow him is to submit to the same tests, to the same wandering as he did.

This total liberation of human possibility that he defined, this total liberation of all possibilities, is undoubtedly the only possibility that has not been tried (I repeat: simplifying, except by me (?)). At the current point in history, I think every conceivable doctrine that has been preached, that the teachings have had, to some extent, an effect. Nietzsche, in turn, conceived and preached a new doctrine, he gathered disciples, dreamed of founding an order: he hated what he received . . . vulgar praise!

Today I think it is good to affirm my distress: I attempted to draw out of myself the consequences of a lucid doctrine, which attracted me like a light: I've reaped anguish and most often the impression of succumbing.

3

Succumbing, I would not in any way abandon the longing about which I have spoken. Or rather, this longing would not let go of me: I would die, but would not silence myself for all that (at least I don't think so): I would want those I love to endure or to succumb in their turn.²

There is a violent movement in the essence of a human being, wanting autonomy, for the being to be free. *Freedom* undoubtedly can be understood in several ways, but who will be surprised today that people are dying for it? The difficulties that Nietzsche encountered—letting go of God and the good, yet nevertheless burning with the ardor of those who died for God or the good—I have encountered them in my turn. The discouraging solitude that he described exhausts me. But breaking with moral entities gives the air I breathe a truth so great that I'd rather live as a cripple or die than fall back into servitude.

4

In the moment in which I am writing, I admit that a moral search locating its object beyond the good first leads one astray. Nothing assures me any more that I will pass the test. This admission, founded on a painful

*See below page 21.

experience, authorizes me to laugh at those who, in attacks or exploitations, confuse Nietzsche's position with that of Hitler.

"At what height is my dwelling? Climbing, I have never counted the steps leading up to me; where all the steps cease, I have my roof and my dwelling." (1882–1884)³

Thus a demand is expressed that does not intend any graspable *good* and yet consumes the one who lives it.

I'd like to put an end to this crude equivocation. It is frightful to see reduced to the level of propaganda a thought that remains comically unemployable, open only to those inspired by the void. According to some, Nietzsche would have had the greatest influence on his times. It's doubtful: no one expected him to mock moral laws. Above all he had no political position: he refused, when asked, to choose one party or another; irritated to be identified with either the right or the left. He was horrified by the idea of subordinating his thought to a cause.

His decided feelings on politics date from his falling out with Wagner, from the disillusion that he experienced the day that Wagner spread out before him the German coarseness: Wagner the socialist, Francophobe, anti-Semite . . . The spirit of the Second Reich, above all in its pre-Hitlerite tendencies, the emblem of which is anti-Semitism, is what he despised most. Pan-German propaganda nauseated him.

"I like to make a clean sweep of things. It is part of my ambition to be considered a despiser of the Germans *par excellence*. My mistrust of the German character I expressed even when I was twenty-six (in the third *Untimely* section 6)—The Germans seem impossible to me. When I imagine a type of man that antagonizes all my instincts, it always turns into a German." (*Ecce Homo*)⁴ If you want to see clearly, on the political level, Nietzsche was the prophet, foretelling the coarse, German fate. He was the first to denounce it. He abhorred the closed, heinous, self-satisfied madness that seized the German mind after 1870, that is exhausting itself today in Hitlerite fury.⁵ No deadlier error has ever led a whole people astray, destined it more cruelly for the abyss. But he detached himself from this mass, dedicated in advance, refusing to participate in the orgy of "self-contentment." His strictness had consequences. Germany chose to ignore a genius that did not flatter her. Only his foreign notoriety attracted the belated attention of his people . . . I know of no better example of a standoff between a man and his country: an entire nation, for fifteen years, remaining deaf to that voice, isn't that serious? Today, watching the ruin, we must admire the fact that at the moment when Germany took the path leading to the worst, the wisest and most passionate of the Germans turned away from her: he was

horrified and unable to overcome his feelings. On both sides, in any case, in the attempts at evasion no less than in the aberrations, after the fact, the absence of escape must be recognized—isn’t that disarming?

Nietzsche and Germany, in their opposition to one another, have met the same kind of end: equally aroused by senseless hopes, but in vain. Outside of this tragic, vain agitation, everything between them was laceration and hatred. The similarities are insignificant. If not for the habit of ridiculing Nietzsche, of doing to him what depressed him most: quick reading, convenient use—*without even letting go of positions he opposed*—his doctrine would be taken for what it is: the most violent of solvents. To take him for a supporter of causes he discredits is not only an insult, it is to trample him underfoot, to prove the one does not know his work when one claims to love it. Whoever would try, as I have, to go to the end of the possible that Nietzsche’s work calls out, would become, in turn, a field of infinite contradictions. To the extent that one might follow this paradoxical teaching, he would see that embracing one of the previously mentioned causes is no longer possible, that his solitude is complete.

5

In this book, written in a rush, I have not developed this point of view theoretically. I even think that an effort of this type would be sullied by ponderousness. Nietzsche wrote “with his blood:”⁶ whoever criticizes him or, better, *experiences* him can only do so by bleeding in his turn.

I wrote hoping my book would appear, if possible, on the occasion of the centenary of Nietzsche’s birth (15 October 1844). I wrote from February to August, hoping that the German retreat would make publication possible. I began with a theoretical statement of the problem (this is Part Two), but this short presentation is fundamentally only a narrative of a lived experience: of an experience lived for twenty years, charged throughout with fear. On this subject, I think it useful to dispel an equivocation: Nietzsche was the philosopher of the “will to power”; he presented himself as such; he was received as such. I think that he was rather the philosopher of *evil*. It is the attraction, the *value* of evil that, it seems to me, gave meaning to what he wanted to say when speaking of power. If it was not like this, how can this passage be explained?

“*Spoiling the Taste*—A: You keep spoiling the taste; that is what everybody says. B: Certainly. I spoil the taste of his party for everyone—and no party forgives that.” (*The Gay Science* § 172)⁷

This reflection, among many others, is entirely irreconcilable with practical, political behaviors, derived from the principle of the “will to power.” Nietzsche had an aversion, during his lifetime, to those who ordered their lives according to this will. If he had a taste for—even succumbed to the necessity—of trampling on received morality, I have no doubt he yielded to a disgust inspired by methods of oppression (the police). He justified his hatred of the good as a condition of freedom itself. Personally, without illusions about the bearing of my attitude, I feel opposed, I oppose myself to all forms of constraint: nevertheless, I make nothing less than *evil* the object of an extreme moral search. Because evil is the opposite of constraint, which on principle exerts itself toward a good. Evil is not what a hypocritical series of misunderstandings makes it out to be: Isn’t it essentially a concrete *freedom*, the uneasy breaking of a taboo?

Anarchy bothers me, particularly the vulgar doctrines apologizing for common criminals. *Gestapo* practices now brought to light show the profound affinity uniting the underworld and the police: no one is more inclined to torture, to cruelly carry out the apparatus of constraint than groups without faith or law. I even despise those confused, weak minds that demand every right for the individual: the limit of the individual is not only found in the rights of another, it is more harshly in those of the *people*. Each man is in solidarity with the people, shares its sufferings or victories, the threads of his being are part of a living mass (for all that, he is no less alone in weighty moments).

These major difficulties of the opposition of the individual to the collective or of good to evil and, in general, these mad contradictions from which we only escape by denial, it seems to me, can only be conquered freely by a single stroke of luck—found in the audacity of taking risks. The stagnation into which succumbs life advanced to the limits of the possible could not exclude a chance of surpassing. A limitless recklessness, no longer pulling back, not looking back, would risk going to the end, which logical thought cannot comprehend. For this reason, I could only write *with my life* this book projected to be on Nietzsche, in which I wanted to propose, if I could, to resolve the intimate problem of morality.

Only my life, only its ludicrous resources could pursue the quest for the Grail of chance in me. This proved able to respond to Nietzsche’s intentions more precisely than power. Only “risk” had the virtue of exploring very far in advance of the possible, without prejudicing the results, granting the *future* alone, to its free expiration, the power that one normally grants to taking sides, which is only a form of the *past*. My book is in part, from day to day, a narrative of dice thrown—thrown, I must say, with

impoverished means. I apologize for this truly comical year of personal interests that the pages of my journal put in play: they are not a source of pain; I laugh at myself voluntarily and know no better way to lose myself in immanence.

6

My taste for making fun of myself and being laughable should not however go so far that it leads my readers astray. The essential problem agitating this disordered book (disordered because it has to be) is that which Nietzsche lived, which his work attempted to resolve: that of the whole man.

"Most men represent pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear. Whole ages, whole peoples are in this sense somewhat fragmentary; it is perhaps part of the economy of human evolution that man should evolve piece by piece. But that should not make one forget for a moment that the real issue is the production of the synthetic man; that lower men, the tremendous majority, are merely preludes and rehearsals out of whose medley the whole man appears here and there, the milestone man who indicates how far humanity has advanced so far." (1887–1888)⁸

But what does this fragmentation mean, or, better, what causes it, if not the need to *act* that specializes and limits us to the horizon of a given activity? Even if it is of general interest, which is not normally the case, the activity subordinating each of our moments to some precise result effaces the complete character of a being. Whoever acts, for this reason substitutes some particular end for the being that he is as a totality, in the least specialized cases, the grandeur of a State, the victory of a party. Every action specializes in that it is limited as an action. An ordinary plant does not act, is not specialized: it is specialized gobbling up flies!

I cannot exist *totally* without surpassing the stage of action in some way. Otherwise I would be a soldier, a professional revolutionary, a scholar, not a "whole man."⁹ The fragmentary state of man is, fundamentally, the same thing as the choice of an object. Once a man limits his desires, for example, to the possession of power in the State, he acts, he knows what he must do. Failure hardly matters: from the beginning he inserts his being advantageously into time. Each of his moments becomes *useful*. Each instant gives him the possibility of advancing toward the chosen goal: his time becomes a march toward this goal (this is what is normally called living). It's the same if his object is his salvation. Every action makes a man a

fragmentary being. I can only maintain the whole character in myself by refusing to act, at least denying the elevation of time reserved for action.

Life remains whole only by not being subordinated to some specific object that surpasses it. In this sense, totality has freedom as its essence. Nevertheless I cannot want to become a whole man by the simple fact of fighting for freedom. Even if fighting in this way is the activity among all others appropriate to me, I could not confuse, within myself, the state of integrity and my fighting. It is the positive exercise of freedom, not the negative struggle against a particular oppression, that elevates me above mutilated existence. Each of us learns bitterly that fighting for his freedom is first of all alienating.

I've said the exercise of freedom is situated on the side of evil, while the struggle for freedom is the conquest of a *good*. If life is whole in me, to the extent that it is, I cannot put it in service to some good, whether that of someone else or of God or myself, without dividing it up. I cannot acquire but only give, and give freely, without the gift ever having as its object someone else's *interest*. (In this regard, I hold the good of another as deceptive since if I will the good of another, it is to find my own, unless I identify it as my own. Totality is this exuberance within me: it is only an empty longing, an unhappy desire to be consumed for no other reason than the desire itself—that it is completely—to burn. In this totality is the desire to laugh that I mentioned, this desire for pleasure, for sanctity, for death . . . It has no other task to fulfill.)

7

So strange a problem is inconceivable unless lived. It is easy to challenge its meaning, saying: infinite tasks impose themselves on us. Precisely in the present times. No one would dream of denying the evidence. It is no less true that the totality of man—the inevitable term—appears just now for two reasons. The first negative: specialization, on all sides, has accelerated to an alarming degree.¹⁰ Second: overpowering tasks nevertheless appear, in our day, *in their exact limits*.

The horizon was once obscure. The object of seriousness was initially the good of the city, but the city was confused with the gods. The object thereafter was the salvation of the soul. In these two cases, action intended, on the one hand, some limited, comprehensible, end; on the other, a totality defined as inaccessible in this world (transcendent). In modern conditions, action has precise ends, completely adequate to the possible: human totality no longer has a mythic aspect. Obviously accessible, human totality is

dedicated to the completion of tasks given and defined materially. It is distant: its tasks subordinating the minds that they fragment. Totality is nonetheless discernable in them.

The totality that the necessary labor aborts in us is nonetheless found in that labor. Not as a goal—the goal is to change the world, to make it equal to humanity—but as an inevitable result. Following this change, man-attached-to-the-task-of-changing-the-world, which is only a fragmentary aspect of man, will be changed into whole-man. This result seems distant for humanity, but the *defined* task describes it: it does not transcend us like the gods (the sacred city) or like the afterlife of the soul; it is in the immanence of attached-man . . . We can put off thinking about it until later, it's nevertheless contiguous with us; if men cannot in their shared existence have a clear conscience from now on, what separates them from this notion is neither the fact of being men (and not gods) nor that of not being dead: it is a momentary obligation.

Similarly, a man in combat must only (provisionally) think of reducing the enemy. Undoubtedly, there is hardly violent combat that does not, in moments of calm, give way to peacetime preoccupations. But in the field, these preoccupations seem minor. The toughest minds take part in these moments of relaxation and take care to let go of their seriousness. In a sense they are fooling themselves: Isn't seriousness, fundamentally, the *reason* blood flows? But this is nothing: seriousness *must* be the same as blood; free life, without combat, disengaged from the necessities of action, not fragmented, *must* appear in light of frivolity: in a world released from the gods, from concern for salvation, even “tragedy” is only an amusement—only a relaxation subordinated to ends shaped by a single activity.

This mode of entry—*by the back door*—of human purpose possesses more than one advantage. The whole man, in this way, is revealed firstly in immanence, at the level of a frivolous life. We must laugh at it, even if it is profoundly tragic. This is a liberating perspective: it acquires nudity, the worst simplicity. I'm grateful—no kidding—for those whose serious attitude and life lived in proximity to death define me as an empty being, a dreamer (at times I agree with them). Fundamentally, the whole man is only a being in whom transcendence is abolished, from whom nothing is separated any longer: part fool, part God, part madman . . . this is transparency.¹¹

If I want to realize my totality within my consciousness, I must relate myself to the immense, comical, painful convulsion of all of humanity.

This movement moves toward *every* meaning. Undoubtedly, tangible action (moving toward *one* given meaning) passes through this incoherence, but this is precisely what gives humanity in my times (as in those of the past) its fragmentary aspect. If I forget this given meaning for a moment, I see the Shakespearean tragicomical sum of whims, lies, suffering, and laughter; the consciousness of an immanent totality comes to light in me, but as a laceration: existence as a whole situates itself beyond any one meaning, it is the conscious presence of man in the world insofar as a human being is *nonsense*, with nothing to do but be what it is, no longer able to surpass itself, to offer itself some meaning by acting.

This consciousness of totality is related to two opposed ways of using an expression. *Nonsense* is normally a simple negation, said of an object that must be removed. The intention that refuses that which has no meaning is in fact the refusal of being whole; it is because of this refusal that we are unaware of the totality of being within us. But if I say *nonsense* with the contrary intention of seeking an object free of meaning, I deny nothing; I speak an affirmation in which *all life* is clarified in consciousness.

Whatever moves toward this consciousness of a totality, toward this complete friendship of humanity for itself, is quite rightly taken to be lacking a fundamental *seriousness*. Following this path, I become ridiculous, I acquire the inconsistency of all men (taken together, overlooking what leads to important changes). I don't want to account for Nietzsche's illness in this way (insofar as we know, it had a somatic origin): it must nevertheless be said that a first movement toward the whole man is the equivalent of madness. I let go of the good and I let go of reason (meaning), I open an abyss beneath my feet, which activity and the judgments bound to activity once separated from me. At the very least, consciousness of totality is in me initially despair and crisis. If I abandon the perspective of action, my perfect nudity is revealed to me. I am in the world without recourse, without support, I break down. There is no other outcome but an endless incoherence in which only my luck will guide me.

Obviously, so disarming an experience cannot be done until all others have been attempted, accomplished, and every other possibility exhausted. Consequently, it can only become the fact of humanity as a whole in the last place. Only a very isolated individual can do it in our day thanks to mental disorder¹² and at the same time an undeniable vigor. If he's

lucky, he can establish an unexpected equilibrium in the incoherence: this divine state of equilibrium translates into a bold simplicity and ceaselessly displays deep imbalance dancing on a tightrope, I don't think the "will to power" can attain it in any other way. If I have been understood, the "will to power," considered as an end, would be a step back. Following it, I would return to servile fragmentation. Once again I would give myself a responsibility, and the good that is the desired power would control me. Divine exuberance, the lightness expressed by Zarathustra's laughter and dance, would be reabsorbed; in place of happiness suspended over the abyss, I'd be tied to weightiness, to the servility of *Kraft durch Freude*.¹³ If we set aside the equivocation of the "will to power," the destiny that Nietzsche gives humanity is situated beyond laceration: there is no return, and from there flows the profound nonviability of the doctrine. In the notes for *The Will to Power*, the sketch of action, the temptation to elaborate a goal and a politics lead only into a maze. The last completed writing, *Ecce Homo*, affirms the absence of a goal, the insubordination of the author to every plan.** Viewed from the perspective of action, Nietzsche's work is an abortion—one of the most indefensible—his life is only a failure, the same as the life of anyone who attempts to put his writings into practice.¹⁴

10

*Don't doubt this for a moment longer.*¹⁵ not a word of Nietzsche's work can be understood before having *lived* this dazzling dissolution into totality; outside of that this philosophy is only a maze of contradictions, worse yet: the pretext for lies of omission (if, like the fascists, one isolates passages for ends that the rest of the work denies). Now I ask that I be followed with closer attention. It might have been clear that the preceding criticism is the masked form of approval. It justifies this definition of the whole man: *the man whose life is an "unmotivated" festival*, and a festival in *every* sense of the word: laughter, dance, an orgy that never subordinates itself, a sacrifice mocking material and moral ends.

The preceding introduces the necessity of a dissociation. Individual and collective extreme states were once motivated by ends. Some of these ends no longer have meaning (expiation, salvation). The good of collectivities is now no longer sought by means with doubtful efficacy but through action

**See below page 72.

directly. In these conditions, extreme states fell into the realm of the arts, which is not without problems. Literature (fiction) was substituted for what was previously the spiritual life, poetry (the disorder of *words*) for *real* trance states. Art constitutes a small free space outside of action, paying for its freedom with its renunciation of the real world. This price is heavy, and few are the writers who do not dream of recovering the lost reality: but for that they must pay in another way, renouncing freedom to serve propaganda. The artist who limits himself to fiction knows that he is not a whole man, but it is the same with a writer of propaganda. The realm of the arts in a sense really encompasses the totality, which nevertheless escapes it in any case.

Nietzsche is far from having *resolved* the difficulty, Zarathustra is also a poet, and even a literary fiction! Only he never accepted it. Praise exasperated him. He thrashed about, seeking a way out in every direction. He never lost Ariadne's thread, *which was to have no goal* and serve no cause: causes, he knew, *clipped wings*. But the absence of a cause, on the other hand, threw him into solitude: this is the sickness of the desert, a cry lost in great silence . . .

The comprehension I invite definitely engages in the same absence of a way out: it assumes the same enthusiastic torture. In a sense I think it's necessary to invert the idea of the eternal return. It is not the promise of infinite repetition that lacerates but this: that the moments caught in the immanence of the return suddenly appear as ends. That one not forget that the moments are *in every system* envisioned and assigned as means: every morality claims: "that each moment of your life should be *motivated*." The return *unmotivates* the moment, frees life of ends and thereby initially destroys it. The return is the dramatic mode and mask of the whole man: it is the desert of a man in which each moment henceforth finds itself unmotivated.

It's useless to try to avoid it: a choice must in the end be made, desert on one side, mutilation on the other. Misfortune can't be dropped off like a package. Suspended in the void, extreme moments are followed by depressions that no hope can alleviate. If however I come to a clear understanding of what is lived in this way, I give up looking for a way out where there isn't one (for that, I hold to my critique). How can the absence of goal inherent in Nietzsche's desire not have consequences? Inexorably, chance—and the search for chance—represents a unique recourse (of which this book describes the vicissitudes). But to advance in this way, with rigor, implies a necessary dissociation in the movement itself.

If it is true that, in the sense in which we normally understand the man of action, man cannot be a whole man, the whole man retains a

possibility of action: on the condition however of reducing the action to principles and ends that are appropriate to that man (in a word, to reason). The whole man cannot be transcended (dominated) by action: he would lose his totality. On the other hand he cannot transcend action (subordinate it to his ends): he would define himself thereby as a motive, would enter into, be annihilated by the gears of motivations. A distinction must be made between, on the one side, the world of motives, wherein each thing is sensible (rational), and the world of nonsense (free of all sense). Each of us belongs in part to one, in part to the other. We can consciously and clearly distinguish what is connected only in ignorance. For me, reason can only be limited by itself. If we act, we stray outside of the motivation of equity and the rational order of actions. Between the two realms, only one relationship is acceptable: action must be limited *rationally* by a principle of freedom.***

The rest is silence.¹⁶

***The share of fire, of madness—*the accursed share*—of the whole man being granted (conceded from outside) by reason according to liberal and reasonable norms. This is the condemnation of capitalism as a mode of irrational activity. From the moment when the whole man (his irrationality) recognizes himself as external to action, where he sees in every possibility of transcendence a trap and the loss of his totality, we will give up irrational dominations (feudal, capitalist) in the realm of activity. Nietzsche undoubtedly foresaw the necessity of this abandonment without perceiving its cause. The whole man can only be whole if he gives up offering himself as the *end* for others: he enslaves himself if he passes beyond, limits himself to feudal or bourgeois limits this side of freedom. Nietzsche, it's true, still believed in social transcendence, in hierarchy. Saying there is nothing sacred in immanence signifies that what was sacred can no longer serve. The time of freedom to come is the time of laughter: "To see tragic natures sink and to be able to laugh . . ." (1882–1884 [*La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 2, § 585; XII, part 2, § 422]). (Would we dare apply this proposition to current events? In place of engaging in a new moral transcendence . . .) In freedom, abandon, the immanence of laughter, Nietzsche liquidated in advance that which still linked him (his juvenile immoralism) to vulgar forms of transcendence—which are freedoms in servitude. The choice of evil is that of freedom, "freedom, liberation from all constraint."

Part One

Mr. Nietzsche

But let us leave Mr. Nietzsche . . .

*The Gay Science*¹

I

I live, if you want to know, among strange men,² in whose eyes the earth, its risks, and the immense play of its animals, mammals, and insects, is equal less to themselves—or to the necessities that limit them—than to the unlimited, lost, unintelligible skies. For these happy beings, Mr. Nietzsche is, in principle, a minor problem . . . But it so happens . . .

These men, obviously, hardly exist . . . it must be admitted quickly. With a few exceptions, my company on earth is that of Nietzsche . . . Blake or Rimbaud are ponderous and touchy.

Proust's innocence, his ignorance of the winds that blow from the outside, limit him.

Nietzsche alone offers me his solidarity—saying *we*. If *community* doesn't exist, Mr. Nietzsche is a philosopher.

"If we don't make," he says to *me*, "the *death of God* a great renunciation and a perpetual *victory over ourselves*, we will have to pay for that loss." (1881–1882)³

This sentence has a meaning: instantly I saw it *completely*.

We can't rely on anything.

But only on *ourselves*.

A comical responsibility falls *on us* and *overpowers us*.

Right up to our day, people have always relied on one another for everything—or on God.

As I write,⁴ I hear rolling thunder and howling wind; alert, I imagine the noise, the explosions, storms over the earth through time. In this time, in this limitless sky, traversed by deafening crashes, delivering death as simply as my heart delivers blood, I feel myself raised up by a sharp movement, too violent right now. Through the shutters on my window comes an infinite

wind, carrying with it the unleashed struggles, the raging misfortune of the centuries. Don't I too have a rage that demands the blood and blindness required to love delivering blows? I would love to be nothing more than a cry of hate—demanding death—and nothing would remain more beautiful than dogs tearing each other apart! But I'm tired, feverish . . .

“Now all the air is overheated, the breath of the earth is aflame. Now you parade around entirely naked, good and bad together. And for a man in love with knowledge, it's a festival.” (1882–1884)⁵

“Those thinkers in whom all stars move in cyclical orbits are not the deepest; he who looks into himself as into a vast space and bears galaxies within also knows how irregular galaxies are; they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence.” (*The Gay Science* § 322)⁶

II

Bad luck gives me the feeling of sin: I don't have the right to be out of luck.

Breaking the moral law was required by this demand. (Compared to this rigorous attitude, the old morality was easy!)

Now a hard, inexorable journey begins—the quest for the most distant possibility.

A morality that is not the conquest of a possibility beyond the good—isn't that laughable?

"To disavow merit: but to do that which is above all praise, indeed above all understanding." (1885–1886)⁷

"If we want to create, we must grant ourselves a greater freedom than has ever been granted, therefore free ourselves of morality and enliven ourselves with festivals. (Intimations of the future! Celebrate the future and not the past! Invent the myth of the future! Live in hopefulness!) Blessed moments! Then let the curtain fall and bring our thoughts back to firm goals close by!" (1882–1886)⁸

The future: not the prolongation of myself through time but the expiration of a being going further, surpassing the limits that have been reached. .

III

*. . . the heights where you find him
place him in relation to the solitaries
and the misunderstood of all times.*

1882–1885⁹

“Where will we find, solitaries among solitaries—for it is here that we *will* certainly *be* some day, through the effects of science—where will we find a companion for humanity? Once we sought a king, a father, a judge for us all, since we didn’t have true kings, fathers, or judges. Later it will be a *friend* that we *will seek*—human beings will have become splendors and autonomous systems, but they will be *alone*. The mythological instinct will then go in quest of a *friend*.” (1881–1882)¹⁰

“We will make philosophy dangerous, change the notion of it, we teach a philosophy that is *dangerous to life*; how can we serve it better? An idea is much more valuable to humanity when it is more costly. If no one hesitates to sacrifice themselves for the idea of ‘God,’ ‘Country,’ ‘Freedom,’ if all of history is only the smoke surrounding this kind of sacrifice, how can we show the primacy of the concept of ‘philosophy’ over these popular concepts—‘God,’ ‘Country,’ ‘Freedom’—other than by making it *more* costly than them, by demanding still greater hecatombs?” (1888)¹¹

When considered, this proposition remains worthy of interest: but with no one being disposed to die for it, Nietzsche’s doctrine is going nowhere.

If one day I had occasion to write my final words in blood, I would write this: “All that I have *lived*, said, written—that I have loved—I thought *communicated*. Without that, I could not have lived. Living in solitude, speaking in a desert of isolated readers, accepting *literature*—how touching! My accomplishment—nothing else—was to put myself at risk, and I fall, through my sentences, like those unfortunates who today endlessly fall in the fields of battle.” I want people to laugh, to shrug their shoulders, saying:

"He's laughing at us, he's alive." It's true, I'm alive, I am even at the moment full of life, but I maintain: "If it seems to you that I was not unreservedly at risk in my book, throw it away. Reciprocally, if, reading my book, you find nothing that puts you at risk—listen to me closely: *your entire life*, up to the hour of your death—your reading completes the corruption . . . you are corrupted."

"*Type of my disciples.*—To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them . . ." (1887)¹²

Nothing human demands *community* from those who want it. Going far demands combined efforts, at least one following another, not stopping at the possibilities of one person. If he cut the links surrounding him, the solitude of a man is a *mistake*. A life is only a link in a chain. I hope that others continue the experience that others began before me, *dedicating themselves* like me, like others before me, to this test: *to go to the end of the possible.*¹³

Every sentence belongs in a museum to the extent that a literary void persists.

It is the pride of contemporary man that nothing be understood that cannot first be deformed and emptied of content by one or another mechanism: propaganda or literature!

Like a woman, possibility has its demands: it asks that someone go all the way with it.

Wandering with art lovers through galleries, across the polished wood floors of a museum of possibilities, we eventually kill in ourselves whatever is not brutally political, limiting it to the state of luxurious illusions (labeled, dated).

No one is aware of this until disarmed by shame.

To live a possibility to the end demands an exchange with others, *assuming it is external to them* and no longer dependent upon anyone among them.

Nietzsche never doubted that the existence of the possibility that he proposed would require a community.

Desire for a community motivated him ceaselessly.

He wrote: “Intimacy with a great thought is intolerable. I seek and call out to those to whom I can communicate this thought without their dying.”¹⁴ He sought *without ever finding a “deep enough soul.”* He had to resign himself, content himself with saying: “After such an appeal rises from the depths of the soul, not to hear any response is a terrifying experience from which the most hardened soul might perish: it delivered me from all ties to living men.”¹⁵

Numerous notes express his suffering . . .¹⁶

“You are preparing yourself for a moment when you will have to speak. Perhaps then you will be ashamed to speak, as you sometimes are ashamed to write, perhaps it will still be necessary for you to interpret yourself, perhaps your actions and abstentions won’t be sufficient to *communicate* yourself! There will come a cultural epoch in which it will be bad taste to read a lot; then you will no longer be ashamed to read; while at present, everyone who calls you a writer offends you; and whoever *praises* you for your stories reveals a tactlessness, opens a gulf between you and him; he doesn’t understand the extent to which he humiliates himself by professing to exalt you in this way. I know the state of the soul of present-day men when they read: Pft! Rather than wanting to work, taking trouble to produce such a state.” (1881–1882)¹⁷

“Men who are destinies, who by bearing themselves bear destinies, the whole species of *heroic* bearers of burdens: oh how they would like to rest from themselves for once! How they thirst for strong hearts and necks, so as to be free from what oppresses them, at least for a few hours! And how vainly they thirst!—They wait; they look at everything that passes: no one approaches them with as much as a thousandth part of their suffering and passion, no one divines *in what way* they are waiting—At length, at length they learn their first piece of worldly prudence—not to wait any more; and soon another one: to be genial, to be modest, from now on to endure everything . . . —in short, to endure even a little more than they have endured so far.” (1887–1888)¹⁸

My life in Nietzsche’s company is a community; my book is this community.

I take these few lines to heart:

“I don’t want to be a saint, I’d rather be a buffoon . . . And perhaps I am a buffoon . . . And yet—but not ‘yet,’ since there have never been anything as deceptive as saints—the truth speaks through my mouth . . . ”¹⁹

I will not lift the mask off of anyone . . .

What do we really know about Mr. Nietzsche?

Constrained by sickness, by silence . . . Hating Christians . . . Not to mention the others! . . .

And then . . . there are so few of us!²⁰

IV

Nothing speaks more vividly to the heart than these gay melodies with their absolute sadness.

1888²¹

"This sovereign spirit who suffices for the present unto himself because he is well-defended and fortified against all surprises, you want him to give up his ramparts and his mystery, and yet you look covetously through the golden bars behind which he has enclosed his domain, seduced into curiosity: for a distant, unknown scent drifts maliciously toward you and betrays something of the hidden gardens and delights." (1885–1886)²²

"There is a false appearance of cheerfulness against which nothing can be done; but he who adopts it must in the end be content with it. We who have taken refuge in *happiness*, we who in some way need the noon and a mad superabundance of sun, we who sit by the side of the road to see life passing, like a parade of masks, like a maddening spectacle, does it not seem that we are aware of something that we fear? Something in us breaks easily. Are we afraid of puerile, destructive hands? Have we taken refuge in life to avoid chance? In its brilliance, in its falseness, in its superficiality, in its changeable lies? If we seem cheerful, is it because we are infinitely sad? We are serious; we know the abyss—is this why we protect ourselves from everything that is serious? We laugh to ourselves at people with melancholic tastes, in whom we discern a lack of depth;—Alas, we envy them all as we mock them—for we are not happy enough to permit ourselves their delicate sadness. We must flee the shadow of sadness: our hell and our darkness are always too close. We know something that we fear, something we don't want to remain close to; the weight of our faith makes us tremble, its whispers makes us go pale—those who don't believe it seem happy to us. We turn away from sad sights, we stop up our ears to the pleadings of those who suffer; pity would break us, if we didn't know how to toughen ourselves.

Stay valiantly by our sides, mocking insouciance! Refresh us, glacial wind! We will no longer take things to heart, we're choosing the *mask* as our supreme divinity and redeemer.” (1885–1886)²³

“Supreme cosmic discourse: ‘I am cruelty, trickery,’ etc. etc. Mocking our fear of taking responsibility for mistakes (the mockery of the *creator*) and of all pain.—More cruel than one ever was, etc.—Supreme form of contentment for one’s own work; shattering it so as to rebuild it ceaselessly. New triumph over death, pain, and annihilation.” (1882–1886)²⁴

“‘Certainly! From now on I will love only necessities! Certainly: *Amor fati* will be my last love!’—Perhaps you will go that far; though first you will have to love the Furies: I confess that their serpents make me hesitate.—‘What do you know about the Furies? The Furies—isn’t that just an unpleasant name for the Graces?’—He’s a madman!” (1881–1882)²⁵

“Giving proof of the power and the assurance acquired by showing that you have ‘unlearned to be afraid’; exchange the mistrust and suspicion against confidence in our instincts; to love and honor oneself in one’s own wisdom, and even *absurdity*; to be part buffoon, part god; neither a figure of renunciation nor an owl; neither a serpent . . .” (1888)²⁶

V

*"What has so far been the greatest sin
here on earth?
Was it not the saying of he who said:
'Woe to those who laugh here?'"*

*Zarathustra, Of the
Higher Man, § 16*

"Friedrich Nietzsche had always wished to write a classical work, a history, system, or poem, worthy of the old Greeks whom he had chosen for masters. And never had he been able to give a form to this ambition. At the end of this year 1883 he had made an all but despairing attempt; the abundance, the importance of his notes let us measure the vastness of a work which was entirely vain. He could neither find his moral ideal nor compose his tragic poem; at the same moment he fails in his two works and sees his dream vanish. What is he? An unhappy soul, capable of short efforts, of lyrical songs and cries." (Daniel Halévy, *The Life of Nietzsche*)²⁷

"In 1872, he sent to Fraulein von Meysenbug the interrupted series of his lectures on the future of Universities: 'It gives one a terrible thirst,' he said to her, 'and, in the long run, nothing to drink.' The same words apply to his poem." (Daniel Halévy, *The Life of Nietzsche*)²⁸

Part Two

Summit and Decline¹

. . . no one shall steal after you here! Your foot itself has extinguished the path behind you, and above that path stands written: Impossible.

Zarathustra, The Wanderer

The questions that I will introduce touch upon good and evil in relation to being or beings.²

The good is given first as good for a being. Evil seems to be harm done—obviously to some being. Good might be respect for beings and evil their violation. If these judgments have some meaning, I can derive them from my feelings.³

On the other hand, in a contradictory way, good is linked to the contempt that beings have for their own interests. According to a secondary conception, but at stake in the ensemble of feelings, evil would be the existence of beings—insofar as existence implies their separation.

Reconciliation between these opposed forms seems simple: good would be the interest of *others*.

It might be that all morality rests on an equivocation and derives from slippages.

But before coming to the questions implied in the preceding statements, I will show this opposition in another light.

*Christ crucified is the most sublime
of all symbols—even now.*

1885–1886⁴

I no longer intend to oppose good and evil but the “moral summit,” different from the good, to the “decline,” which has nothing to do with evil and whose necessity determines, on the contrary, the modalities of the good.

The summit corresponds to excess, to the exuberance of forces. It carries tragic intensity to its maximum. It is linked to limitless expenditures of energy, to the violation of the integrity of beings. It is therefore closer to evil than to good.

Decline—corresponding to moments of exhaustion, to fatigue—gives all value to the concern for conserving and enriching the being. Moral rules arise from it.

To begin, I will show in the summit that is Christ on the cross the most equivocal expression of evil.⁵

The killing of Jesus Christ is held by Christians as a group to be an evil. It is the greatest sin that has ever been committed.

This sin even possesses a limitless character. The criminals who committed it are not the only actors in the drama: the fault falls on all human beings. Insofar as a human being commits an evil act (every human being is *obliged* to do so on his own), he puts Christ on the cross.

Pilate’s executioners crucified Jesus, but the God that they nailed to the cross was put to death in sacrifice: the agent of the sacrifice is the Crime that sinners have committed infinitely, since Adam.⁶ The hidden hideousness of human life (everything dirty and impossible that it carries in its folds, the evil condensed in its stench) has so perfectly violated the good that nothing close can be imagined.

Putting Christ to death undermines the being of God.

The events took place as if the creatures could only communicate with their Creator through a wound lacerating integrity.

The wound is wanted, desired by God.

The human beings who did this to him are no less guilty.

On the other hand—and this is no less strange—this guilt is the wound lacerating the integrity of every guilty being.

In this way, God, wounded by the guilt of human beings, and the human beings who wound their guilt in relation to God find, painfully, the unity that seems to be their purpose.

If they had each kept their respective integrity, if the human beings had not sinned, God on the one side, the human beings on the other would have persevered in their isolation. A night of death in which the Creator and the creatures bled together, lacerated each other and in every way put themselves in question—to the extreme limit of shame—was found to be necessary for their communion.⁷

Thus the “communication” without which, for us, nothing would exist, is assured by crime. “Communication” is love, and love defiles those it unites.⁸

In the crucifixion, man attains the summit of evil. But it is precisely for having attained it that he ceases to be separated from God. Here one sees that the “communication” of beings is assured by evil. The human being without evil would be folded onto himself, enclosed in his independent sphere. But the absence of “communication”—empty solitude—would be without any doubt a greater evil.

The position of human beings is disarming.

They must “communicate” (as much with indefinite existence as among themselves): the absence of “communication” (the egoist folded back on himself) is obviously the most condemnable. But “communication” cannot take place without wounding or defiling the beings, is itself guilty. The good, in whatever way one envisions it, is the good of beings, but in wanting to attain it, we must ourselves question—in the night, through evil—the very beings in relation to which we want it.

A fundamental principle is expressed as follows:

“Communication” cannot take place between one full and intact being and another: it wants beings who *question* being in themselves, who place their being at the limit of death, of nothingness.* The moral summit is the moment of risk, of the suspension of the being beyond itself, at the limit of nothingness.

*On the meaning of this word in this book see Appendix V, “Nothingness, Immanence, and Transcendence.”

Man is the cruellest animal. At tragedies, bullfights, and crucifixions he has so far felt best on earth, and when he invented hell for himself, that was his heaven on earth.

Zarathustra,
The Convalescent, § 2

It is important for me to show that, in “communication,” in love, desire has nothingness as its object.

It is this way in every “sacrifice.”⁹

In a general way, sacrifice, and not uniquely that of Jesus, seems to have given the feeling of a crime.^{**} Sacrifice is on the side of evil; it is an evil necessary for the good.

In another way, sacrifice would be unintelligible if not regarded as a means by which human beings, universally, “communicated” among themselves at the same time as with the shadows with which they populated hell or heaven.

To make the link between “communication” and sin—between sacrifice and sin—more tangible, I will show in principle that desire, meaning sovereign desire, corrodes and nourishes anguish, engages the being in a search beyond itself.¹⁰

Beyond my being is, first, nothingness. This is my absence, which I sense in laceration, in the painful feeling of a lack. The presence of the other is revealed through this feeling. But it is only fully revealed if the *other* leans over the limits of nothingness, or falls into it (dies). “Communication” only takes place *between two beings at risk*—lacerated, suspended, both leaning over nothingness.¹¹

^{**}See Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*.

This way of seeing gives sacrifice and the work of the flesh the same explanation. In sacrifice, human beings unite themselves with a god personified by a living being by putting an animal or human victim to death (they even unite themselves with each other in the same way). The sacrifice itself—and those who participate in it—is in some way identified with the victim. Thus at the moment of death they lean over their own nothingness. At the same time they grasp their god slipping into death. The victim's abandonment (as in a holocaust, where the victim is burned) coincides with the blow striking the god. The gift partially places the being of man at risk: for a brief moment, man is free to unite with the being of his divinity, which death has, at the same time, put at risk.¹²

It would be frightful to still believe in sin; on the contrary, everything that we do, which we had to repeat a thousand times, is innocent.

1881–1882¹³

More often than the sacred object, desire has the flesh for its object and, in desire for the flesh, the play of “communication” appears strictly in its complexity.

In the carnal act, man crosses the limit of beings by defiling that limit—and by defiling himself.

The sovereign desire of beings has the beyond of the being for its object. Anguish is the feeling of a danger linked to this inexhaustible expectation.

In the realm of sensuality,¹⁴ a being of flesh is the object of desire. But in the fleshly being what attracts is not immediately the being, it is its wound: a point of rupture in the integrity of the body, a filthy orifice. This wound doesn't exactly put life at risk, only its integrity, its purity. It doesn't kill, it defiles. What defilement reveals does not differ, essentially, from what death reveals: the corpse and excretion both express *nothingness*, the corpse participates in defilement in its way. Excrement is a dead part of myself that I must reject, making it disappear, completing its annihilation. In sensuality as in death, nothingness is moreover not *itself* what attracts. What captivates us about death, what leaves us overpowered but gripped, in silence, by a feeling of sacred presence—or emptiness—is not the corpse as such. If we see (or imagine) the horror that death actually is—the undressed corpse, rot—we only experience disgust. The pious respect; the calm, even gentle veneration in which we linger, is linked to artificial aspects—thus the apparent serenity of the dead person whose mouth was wrapped shut two hours earlier. Even in sensuality, the transposition is necessary to attract us to nothingness. We're horrified by excretions, even insurmountably disgusted. We limit ourselves to undergoing an attraction to the state in which the transposition takes place—to the nudity that can, if we choose,

be immediately attractive through skin tone or the purity of forms. Horror of excretions put aside, in shame, along with the formal ugliness of the organs, constitutes the obscenity of the body—zone of nothingness that must be crossed, without which beauty would not have the suspended, risked element, which is our damnation. Pretty, voluptuous nudity finally triumphs in the risk that carries out the defilement (in other cases, nudity fails, remains ugly, entirely at the level of the defiled).

If I now evoke temptation (often independent of the idea of sin: we often resist, fearing unpleasant consequences), I perceive, standing out, the tremendous movement of being in carnal games.

Temptation locates sexual indiscretion in the face of boredom. We aren't always prey to boredom: life reserves the possibility of numerous communications. But if it is lacking: boredom then reveals the nothingness of the being enclosed in itself. If it no longer communicates, a separated being cracks, it decays and feels (obscurely) *that on its own it does not exist*. This internal nothingness, without outlet, without attraction, repels it: the being succumbs to the discomfort of boredom, and *boredom* sends the being back from internal nothingness to external nothingness, to *anguish*.¹⁵

In the state of temptation, this return—in anguish—lingers endlessly over nothingness before which the desire to communicate places us. If I envision the nothingness of obscenity independently of desire and so to speak in itself, I perceive the tangible, graspable sign of a limit at which the being comes to be lacking. But in temptation this external nothingness appears as a response to the thirst for communication.

The meaning and reality of this response are easy to determine. I only communicate outside of myself, by letting myself go or throwing myself out. But outside of myself, I don't exist. I am certain of this: to abandon being in myself, to seek it outside, is to risk wasting—or annihilating—this without which existence from outside would not even have appeared to me, this *self* without which nothing that “exists for me” would exist. In temptation, the being finds itself, if I can put it this way, crushed by the double pincers of nothingness. If it does not communicate, it is annihilated—in this void that is life isolating itself. If it wants to communicate, it equally risks being lost.

Undoubtedly, this only pertains to defilement, and defilement is not death. But if in shameful circumstances I give in—as in paying for a whore—without dying, I would still be ruined, fallen in my own judgment: crude obscenity will corrode being in me, its excremental nature will rub off on me, this nothingness that filth carries with it, that I should have rejected, stayed away from at any price; I will be defenseless, disarmed before it, opened up to it by an exhausting wound.

Ongoing resistance to temptation makes this aspect of carnal life stand out clearly. But the same element enters into all sensuality. Communication, however weak it may be, requires risk. It only takes place to the extent that beings, leaning out of themselves, risk themselves under threat of degradation. This is why even the purest beings *aren't unaware* of the bilges of ordinary sensuality (being unable, no matter what they do, to remain foreign to it). The purity to which they're attached signifies that an ungraspable, negligible share of ignominy suffices to take hold of them: with extreme aversion, they intuit what another exhausts. All men, in the end, get h. . . for the same reasons.

*It may have been good for that
preacher of the little people that he
suffered and tried to bear man's sin.
But I rejoice over great sin as my great
consolation.*

Zarathustra, Of the
Higher Man, § 5

*. . . the highest good and the highest
evil are identical.*

1884–1885¹⁶

Beings, human beings, can only “communicate”—*live*—outside of themselves. And as they must “communicate,” they must *want* this evil, defilement, that, placing being at risk in themselves, renders both being and themselves penetrable to one another.

I once wrote: “What you are comes from the activity that links the countless elements that compose you to the intense communication of these elements among themselves. These are contagions of energy, movement, color, or transferences of elements, which constitute internally the life of your organic being. Life is never situated in one particular point: it passes rapidly from one point to another (or from multiple points to other points), like a current or a kind of electrical stream.”¹⁷ And further on: “Your life is not limited to this ungraspable inner streaming; it also streams outside and opens itself incessantly to what flows or surges toward it. The enduring vortex that composes you throws itself toward similar vortices with which it forms a vast figure, animated by a measured agitation. Now to live signifies for you not only the flux and the fleeting play of light that unifies itself in you, but the passages of warmth and light from one being to another, from you to your fellow being or from your fellow being to you (even in the moment when you read me, the contagion of my fever reaches you): words, books, monuments, symbols, laughter are only so many paths of this contagion, of these passages.”¹⁸

But these burning courses only replace the isolated being if that being consents, if not to annihilation, at least to *risk* itself, and in the same movement, *to risk* others.

All "communication" participates in suicide and crime.

Funereal horror accompanies it, disgust is its sign.

And in this light evil appears—as a source of life!

By destroying in myself, in others, the integrity of being, I open myself to communion, I attain a moral summit.

And the summit is not *submission to*, it is *wanting* evil. It is the voluntary accord with sin, crime, evil. With an endless fate that demands that for some to live, others must die.

*And all this was believed, as
morality!—Ecrasez l’infâme!
Have I been understood?—Dionysus
versus the Crucified*

*Ecce Homo*¹⁹

To make distinctions is only an impoverishment: even the least reserve offends fate. What for one person is only an *excess harmful to excess*, for another—*positioned further on*—isn’t that at all. Can I affirm that *nothing human is foreign to me?*²⁰ With even the smallest bet, I open a perspective raising the ante infinitely.

In this moving vista, a summit can be glimpsed.

As the highest point—the most intense degree—of attraction for itself, that can define life.

A kind of solar explosion, independent of consequences.

In what precedes, I’ve presented evil as a means that must be used if we want to “communicate.”

I affirmed: “The human being without evil would be folded onto himself” or “sacrifice is evil necessary for the good,” and further on: “evil appears . . . as a source of life!” In this way I introduced a fictional relationship. By making the good of the being visible in “communication,” I related “communication” to the being that it rightly surpasses. As the “good of the being,” it must in fact be said that “communication,” evil, and summit are reduced to a servitude to which they cannot submit. The very notions of *good* and *being* cause the intervention of a duration, the concern of which is foreign to evil, to the summit, in its *essence*. What “communication” wants is *in its essence* the surpassing of the being. What is rejected, *in its essence*, in evil is concern for time to come. It is precisely in this sense that the longing for the summit, *that the movement of evil—constitutes all morality within us.* A morality *in itself* only has *value* (in the strong sense) by playing a part in the surpassing of the being—rejecting concern for the time to come.

A morality is valuable to the extent that it proposes to us that we put ourselves at risk. Otherwise it is only an interesting rule, lacking the element

of exaltation (the dizziness of the summit, which poverty baptizes with a servile name, *imperative*).

Against these propositions, the essence of “popular morality” is most clearly evidenced in relation to sexual disorder.

Insofar as human beings take it upon themselves to give others a rule of life, they must appeal to merit and propose the good of the being as the end—which will be accomplished in the time to come.

If my life is at risk for some comprehensible good—such as for the city, for some useful cause—my behavior is meritorious, popularly considered moral. And for the same reasons, I will kill and cause destruction *in conformity with moral law*.

In another area, it is evil to squander resources by gambling, drinking, but good to improve the fate of the poor.

Blood sacrifice is itself execrated (cruel waste). But the object of the greatest loathing is the freedom of the senses.²¹

Sexual life envisioned in relation to its ends is almost entirely *excess*—savage eruption toward an inaccessible summit. It is exuberance opposed in its essence to concern for time to come. The nothingness of obscenity cannot be subordinated. The fact of not being the suppression of the being but only conception resulting from a contact, rather than attenuating, increases the reprobation. No merit is linked to it. The erotic summit is not heroic, attained *at the cost of harsh suffering*. Apparently the results are without relation to the efforts. Chance alone seems to arrange them. Chance plays a role in the disorder of wars, but the effort, the courage leave an appreciable share to merit. The tragic aspects of war, opposed to the comic filthiness of love, have the effect of elevating the tone of morality exalting war—and its economic profits . . .—overwhelming sensual life. I doubt I have yet sufficiently clearly clarified the naiveté of the moral bias. The weightiest argument is the interest of families, which sexual excess obviously injures. Ceaselessly confused with the harshness of moral longings, a concern for the integrity of beings is painfully laid out.

The essence of the moral act is, in popular judgment, to serve some utility—to relate to the good of some being a movement in which the being longs to surpass itself. Morality in this view is no more than a negation of morality. The result of this equivocation is to contrast the good of others with the good of the man that I am: the slippage effectively reserves the coincidence of a superficial contempt with a profound submission to serving the being. Evil is egoism and altruism, good.

Morality is lassitude.

1882–1885²³

This morality is less a response to our burning desires for a summit than a barrier opposed to these desires. Exhaustion comes quickly, the disordered expenditures of energy, in which we engage our concern for shattering the limits of being, are unfavorable to conservation, which is to say to the good of the being.²⁴ Whether this is a matter of sensuality or crime, ruin is implied as much for the agents as for the victims.

I don't mean to say that sensuality and crime always answer or even ordinarily answer to the desire for a summit. Sensuality pursues its banal disorders—and without real force—through individuals who simply let go: nothing is more common. Is not that which, with a natural aversion, we name *pleasure* basically the subordination of weighty beings to these excesses of joy through which other, lighter beings seek access to lose themselves? A crime reported in the newspaper has little to do with the murky attractions of a sacrifice: the disorder that it introduces is not desired for what it is but is put in service of illegal *interests*, which are hardly different, viewed insidiously, from the most elevated interests. The lacerated regions that vice and crime designate indicate nothing less than the summit toward which the passions lead.

What were the highest moments of the lives of savages? Which freely translated our longings? The *festivals*—nostalgia for which still moves us—were times of sacrifice and orgy.²⁵

*The happiness we find in becoming
is only possible in the annihilation
of the reality of “existence,” of
beautiful appearances, in the
pessimistic destruction of illusions—
it is in the annihilation of even
the most beautiful appearance that
Dionysian happiness attains its
height.*

1885–1886²⁶

If I now consider Christian ecstasy in light of the principles I've presented, I am able to see participating in one single movement the furies of Eros and of crime.²⁷

More than any believer, a Christian mystic crucifies Jesus. The mystic's love even demands that God put Himself at risk, that He cry out His despair on the cross. The crime of saints is essentially an erotic crime. It is linked to these transports, to these torturous fevers that brought burning love into the solitude of convents.

These aspects of extreme laceration—striking in prayers at the foot of the cross—are not foreign to non-Christian mystic states. Every time, desire is the origin of the moments of ecstasy, and love, through whose movement this desire is expressed, always has the annihilation of beings for its object at some point. The nothingness at stake in mystic states is sometimes the nothingness of the subject, sometimes that of the being considered within the totality of the world: the theme of the night of anguish can be found in some form in Asian meditations.

From whatever confession that gave rise to it, the mystic trance exhausts itself in surpassing the limit of the individual being. Its intimate burning, brought to the extreme degree of intensity, consumes inexorably everything that gives beings, things, an appearance of stability, everything

reassuring, supporting. Desire lifts the mystic little by little to a ruin so perfect, to an expenditure of himself that is so perfect that in it life is comparable to a flash of sunlight.

However it is clear, whether we are talking about yogis, Buddhists, or Christian monks, that these ruins, these consummations linked to desire are not real: in them the crime or the annihilation of beings is representation. The compromise that is, in moral matters, established on all sides is easily shown: real disorders, heavy with disagreeable repercussions, as are orgies and sacrifices, were rejected to the extent possible. But with the desire for a summit to which these acts responded persisting, the necessity remains for beings to find that which is beyond themselves through "communication"; symbols (fictions) substituted themselves for realities. The sacrifice of the mass, in which the real death of Jesus figures, is still only a symbol in the infinite renewal that the Church makes of it. Sensuality takes the form of spiritual effusion. Themes of meditation replace real orgies, alcohol, flesh, blood, become objects of reprobation. In this way, the summit responding to desire remains accessible and the violations of the being to which it is linked are no longer disadvantages, being no longer anything but representations of the spirit.

And as for decadence, whoever does not die prematurely is an image of it, in all relationships or a few if necessary; they know from experience the instincts that are implicated in it; during nearly half of their lives, human beings are decadent.

1888²⁸

The substitution of spiritual summits for immediate summits cannot take place, however, if we don't admit the primacy of the future over the present, if we don't draw the consequences of the inevitable decline that follows the summit. Spiritual summits are the negation of that which could be given as summit morality. They arise from a morality of decline.

The slippage toward spiritual forms demanded a first condition: a pretext was necessary for the rejection of sensuality. If I suppress consideration for time to come, I cannot resist temptation. I can only defenselessly yield to the slightest desire. Impossible even to speak of temptation: I can no longer be tempted; I live at the mercy of my desires, which can henceforth only be opposed by external difficulties. In fact, this state of happy availability is not humanly imaginable. Human nature cannot *as such* reject concern for the future: the states in which this preoccupation no longer touches us are above or below humanity.

Whatever the case, we escape dizzying sensuality only by representing for ourselves some good, situated in a future time, that sensuality would destroy and that we must reserve. So we can attain the summits found beyond the fever of the senses only on the condition of introducing an ulterior goal. Or, if you like, more clearly—and more seriously—we attain non-sensual, non-immediate summits only on the condition of aiming for a necessarily superior end. And this end is not only situated above sensuality—

which it stops—it must also be situated *above the spiritual summit*. Beyond sensuality, beyond the response to desire, we are effectively in the realm of the good, which is to say of the primacy of the future in relation to the present, of the conservation of the being in relation to its glorious loss.

In other words, resistance to temptation implies abandoning the morality of the summit, lifting up the morality of decline. When we feel our strength failing, when we decline, we condemn excess expenditure in the name of a superior good. As long as a juvenile effervescence animates us, we agree to dangerous wastes, with all kinds of bold risks. But when our strengths come to fail us, or we begin to perceive their limits, *when we start to decline*, we are preoccupied with acquiring and accumulating goods of all kinds, with enriching ourselves in light of difficulties to come. We act. And action, effort, can have no other end than the acquisition of strength. Now, spiritual summits, in opposition to sensuality—from the very fact that they oppose themselves to it—inscribing themselves in the unfolding of an action, link themselves to efforts intended to gain some good. The summits no longer uphold a *summit morality*: a *morality of decline* points less to our desires than to our efforts.

I cannot remember that I ever tried hard—no trace of struggle can be demonstrated in my life; I am the opposite of a heroic nature. “Willing” something, “striving” for something, envisaging a “purpose,” a “wish”—I know none of this from experience.

*Ecce Homo*²⁹

In this way the mystic state is conditioned, communally, by the search for salvation.

In all likelihood, this link between a summit as a mystical state and the impoverishment of the being—with fear and greed expressed in the values of decline—is a little superficial and, profoundly, must be false. It is no less apparent. An ascetic in his solitude pursues an end toward which ecstasy is the means. He *works* for his salvation: just as a merchant buys and sells for profit, a worker sweats for his salary. If the worker or the merchant were rich enough for their tastes, if they had no concern for the future, no fear of death or destruction, they would walk out of their work site, their business on the spot, in search of whatever dangerous pleasures were available. For his part, to the extent that he succumbs to human misery, the ascetic has the possibility of undertaking a long labor of deliverance.³⁰

Ascetic practices are *human* precisely in that they hardly differ from the work of a land surveyor. In the end, the greatest difficulty is undoubtedly in seeing this limit: without the bait of salvation (or any similar bait), no one could ever have found the mystic path! People must have said to themselves or to others: it is good to do this or otherwise, in light of some result, some gain. Without these crude artifices they wouldn’t have been able to have a behavior of decline (the infinite sadness, the laughable seriousness necessary for the effort). Isn’t this clear? I don’t give a damn about the future: I suddenly burst into infinite laughter! I’ve lost in a single blow every reason to make an effort.

We see a hybrid species born, the artist, distanced from crime by the weakness of his will and his fear of society, not yet ripe for the madhouse, but extending his antenna curiously toward these two spheres.

1888³¹

*We must go further.
To articulate a critique is already decline.
The fact of “speaking” of a summit morality itself upholds a morality of decline.*

Having given up concern for the future, I also lose my reason for existing and even, in a word, my reason.

I lose every possibility of speaking.

Speaking, like I just did, of summit morality is in particular the most laughable thing to do!

For what reason, toward what end surpassing the summit itself, would I want to explain this morality?

And, first off, how would I structure it?

The construction and explanation of a summit morality assume on my part a decline, assume accepting moral rules related to fear. In fact, the summit proposed for an end is no longer the summit: I am reducing it to the search for a profit *since I am talking about it*. Giving utter debauchery as a moral summit, I entirely change its nature. Specifically, I deprive myself in this way of the power to reach the summit through it.

The debauched individual only has a chance of reaching the summit if he does not intend to do so. The extreme moment of the senses demands an authentic innocence, the absence of moral pretension and even, as a side effect, consciousness of evil.³²

Like Kafka's castle, in the end, the summit is only the inaccessible. It slips away from us, at least until we stop being human: stop speaking.

One can moreover oppose the summit to decline as evil to good.

The summit is not "that which ought to be reached"; decline "that which ought to be suppressed."

Just as the summit is, in the end, only the inaccessible, decline is, from the beginning, inevitable.

Setting aside popular confusions, I have not however removed the demand for the summit (I have not removed the desire). If I have admitted its inaccessible nature—one reaches for it only on the condition of not wanting to reach for it—I nevertheless have no reason to accept the uncontested sovereignty of decline—the fact of speaking commits one to it. I can't deny it: decline is inevitable and the summit itself indicates it; if the summit is not death, the necessity of descent follows from it. Essentially, the summit is the place where life is at the limit of the impossible. I attain it, to the very weak extent that I attain it, only by expending strength without measure. I will have new strength to waste only on the condition, through my labor, of recuperating that which I have lost. What am I moreover? Inscribed in human limits, I can only ceaselessly make use of my will to act. Ceasing to work, forcing myself in some way toward a definitively illusory goal, cannot be considered. Even assuming that I consider—at best—the Caesarean remedy, suicide: this possibility presents itself to me as an undertaking demanding—admittedly with a disarming pretension—that I put concern for time to come before concern for the present moment. I cannot give up the summit; it's true. I protest—and I can bring a lucid, even dry ardor to my protestation—against everything that demands that we choke desire. I can however only accept the fate that obligates me to a life of labor by laughing. I don't dream of *suppressing moral rules*. They derive from the inevitable decline. We decline ceaselessly, and the desire that destroys us is only reborn when our strength is restored. Since we must

play the part of our own impotence, lacking limitless strength, to the extent that we recognize in ourselves the necessity to which we must submit even by denying it. We cannot equal the empty sky that infinitely murders and annihilates us to the last man. I can only sadly say, of the necessity to which I submit, that it *humanizes me*, that it gives me an undeniable dominion over things. I can however refuse to not see this as a sign of impotence.³³

Again and again the human race will decree from time to time: "There is something at which it is absolutely forbidden henceforth to laugh." The most cautious friend of man will add: "Not only laughter and gay wisdom but the tragic, too, with all its sublime unreason, belongs among the means and necessities of the preservation of the species." And consequently! Consequently!

The Gay Science § 1

Moral ambiguities constitute fairly stable systems of equilibrium, equal to existence in general. We can only partially go back to them. Who would deny the role of devotion? And should we be surprised that it involves a well-understood common interest? But the existence of morality, the problem that it introduces, extends our inquiry well beyond such a close horizon. I don't know if, in the preceding lengthy considerations, I have made comprehensible the degree to which the last inquiry was lacerating. Now I will develop a perspective that, in order to be exterior to the simple questions that I would like to introduce, nonetheless draws out their implications.

As much as the excessive movements to which desire drives us can be linked to useful actions or judged as such—useful meaning to beings in decline, reduced to the necessity of accumulating strength—one could respond to the desire for the summit. Thus people once practiced sacrifice, even gave themselves up to orgies—attributing to the sacrifice, to the orgy, an efficacy of action to the benefit of the clan or the city. The violation of the other that is war possesses this beneficial value in another way, and to the extent that success follows, rightly so. Beyond the narrow, visibly

heavy, egotistical benefit to the city, in spite of the possibilities of individual devotion, inequality in the division of products within the city—which unfolds as a disorder—obligated the search for a good that would agree with the feeling of justice. Beyond the egotistical good of the city, salvation—the concern for a personal salvation after death—became the motive for action and, consequently, the means of linking action to the ascent to the summit, the surpassing of the self. In a general way, personal salvation permits escape from the laceration that decomposed society: injustice became bearable, no longer being without appeal; people even began to link their efforts in order to combat the effects of injustice. Beyond the goods defined as so many motives for action, successively by the city and by the Church (the Church in its turn, became the analogue of a city and, in the crusades, people died for it), the possibility of radically suppressing the obstacle of unequal conditions defined a final form of beneficial action, motivating the sacrifice of lives. So throughout history—and making history—the *reasons* that people can have for going to the summit, to put themselves at risk, developed. But the difficulty, beyond that, is to go to the summit without a reason, without a pretext. As I said: we speak of the quest for the summit from an awkward position. *We only find it by speaking of something else.*³⁴

In other words, every risk, every ascent, every sacrifice is, like sensual excess, a loss of strength, an expenditure, we must motivate our expenditures each time with a promise of gain, misleading or not.

If we consider this situation in general economy, it is strange.

I can imagine a historical situation that reserved possibilities for action the way an old person survives, eliminating development and hope beyond the limits they have attained. A revolutionary action would found a classless society—beyond which a historical action could no longer be born—I can at least assume.³⁵ But I must make a remark on this subject. In a general way, it appears that, in human terms, the sum of energy produced is always greater than the sum necessary for its production. Hence this continual too-full churning of energy—which endlessly drives us toward the summit—constituting this *malefic* share that we attempt (rather pointlessly) to expend for the common *good*. The mind that orders the concern for the good and the primacy of the future is reluctant to imagine squandering *guilty*, useless, or even harmful. Now since we lack the motives for action that up till now have provided pretexts for infinite squandering: humanity would apparently encounter a possibility of catching its breath . . . But in such a case, what will become of the energies that overtake us? . . .³⁶

Insidiously, I have wanted to show what *exterior* implications my question might have. I must, it's true, recognize that situated in this way—on the level of economic calculation—it loses in acuity what it acquires in amplitude. The question is effectively altered. To the extent that I have put *interest* at risk, I have had to subordinate *expenditure* to it. This is obviously an impasse, since ultimately we cannot endlessly expend to gain: as I've said, *the sum of energy produced is greater . . .*³⁷

Now I will formulate the questions implicit in my account.

Is there a moral goal that I can reach beyond beings?

To which I have already answered that, in any case, I can neither seek it nor speak of it.

But I live, and life (language) is in me. Now language in me cannot abandon its moral goal . . . It must in any case be affirmed that, if I follow the slopes of decline, I cannot encounter this goal.

And this said, I continue to live.

I will add—I speak for myself—that I cannot seek a *good* to substitute for the goal that escapes me.

I no longer know of any reason—external to myself—to sacrifice myself or the little strength that I have.³⁸

I live at the mercy of laughter, which cheers me, and sexual excitation, which agonizes me.

If I'm interested, *mystical states* are open to me.

Taking my distance from every faith, deprived of all hope, I have no motive to access these states.

I feel distant from the idea of making an effort to bring them about.

Isn't planning *inner experience* distancing myself from the summit that it might have been?³⁹

Before those who possess a motive, a reason, I don't feel I'm missing anything; I'm not envious of anyone. On the contrary, I encourage them to share my fate. I experience my hatred of motives and my fragility as happy. The extreme difficulty of my situation is my luck. I'm intoxicated with it.

But I carry within me, despite myself, like an explosive charge, a question:

WHAT CAN A LUCID MAN DO IN THIS WORLD?

BEARING WITHIN HIMSELF A LIMITLESS DEMAND.⁴⁰

You are not eagles: hence you have never experienced the happiness that is in the terror of the spirit. And he who is not a bird should not build his nest over abysses.

Zarathustra, Of the Famous Wise Men

Having posed my question in this way, I have said what I had to say: I have no answers. In this discussion, I've left aside the desire for *autonomy*, the thirst for *liberty* that seems to be a human passion and that, undoubtedly, is my passion. I'm thinking less of the freedom that an individual wrests from public powers than of the human autonomy at the heart of a hostile, silent nature. It's true that depending upon what is given, as little as possible commits us to indifference toward the time to come: on the other hand, this sets us in opposition to the satisfaction of desire. However, I see the summit that I've described as being the same thing as freedom for the being.

In order to make this link tangible, I will make use of a detour.

Whatever concern we have, our thought is exhausted without ever embracing every possibility. At every instant we feel the enigmatic night slip away from us, in an infinitely great depth, the very object of our reflection. The smallest thought must receive infinite extrapolation. When the desire to grasp the truth grips me, I finally understand the desire to know, to reach the light of day, I feel myself gripped by despair. I suddenly know myself to be lost (lost forever) in this world in which I am as powerless as a small child (though there are no adults to whom to turn for help). In fact, to the extent that I make an effort to think about this, I no longer see as an end the moment when light will be produced but rather the moment when light will be extinguished, when I will find myself once again in the night like a sick child and, ultimately, a dying man. He who thirsts for the truth, truly thirsts, cannot have my carelessness: every time the infinite

extrapolation of the possible returns to be exhausted by him. I truly hope that with youthful audacity he tries to do so. But similarly that, in order to act, we don't need to imagine objects in the infinite extrapolation of their aspects—we handle them, and the efficacy of our movements responds to the value of concepts—similarly, when it comes to inquiry, I am undoubtedly bound to push the question back as far as possible, but “as far as possible” is “doing my best”—yet if I desired the Truth, I would have to satisfy an absolute demand. I can't go along without acting, questioning, but I can *live*—act, question—without knowing. Perhaps the desire to know has only one meaning: to serve as the motive for the desire to question. Undoubtedly knowing is necessary for the autonomy that action—by which it transforms the world—procures for man. But beyond the conditions of *making*, knowledge ultimately appears as a lure in relation to the inquiry that commands it. When inquiry fails, we laugh. The ravishments of ecstasy and burning Eros are so many questions—without responses—to which nature and our nature are subjected. If I knew how to respond to the moral inquiry—which I articulated a little while ago—honestly, I'd be decidedly distancing myself from the summit. By leaving the questions open in myself as a wound, I hold onto a chance, a possible access to it. If speaking as I have just now is fundamentally lying back like a sick man, even precisely: lying down in order to die is not asking for care. You'll have to excuse my excessive irony. I don't really want to mock anyone. I only want to mock the *world*; I mean the ungraspable nature from which I come. We aren't in the habit of taking it into account, if we reflect, if we speak, but death will interrupt us. I won't always have to pursue the servile search for truth. Every question will ultimately remain unanswered. And I will slip away in such a way that I impose silence. If others take up the job, they will not complete any more of it, and death will cut off their speech as it does mine. Will being come into a truer autonomy? To speak in this way seems to me to breathe the free air of the summit.

Existence cannot be at once autonomous and viable.⁴¹

Part Three

Diary

February–August 1944

February–April 1944

The “Teacup,” “Zen,” and the Beloved

The new feeling of power: the mystical state; and the clearest, most daring rationalism serving the path to reach it.

1884¹

Yet whenever “the hero” appeared on the stage, something new was attained: the gruesome counterpart of laughter, that profound emotional shock felt by many individuals at the thought: “Yes, I am worthy of living!” Life and I and all of us became interesting to ourselves once again for a little while. There is no denying that in the long run every one of these great teachers of a purpose was vanquished by laughter, reason, and nature: the short tragedy always gave way again and returned to the eternal comedy of existence; and “the waves of uncountable laughter”—to cite Aeschylus—must in the end overwhelm even the greatest of these tragedians.

The Gay Science § 1

If one fails to perceive a nonchalant movement, setting aside the most well-established problems, playing with everything (in particular with misfortune, suffering), veiling success under the cover of depression, I am, if one sticks to this, a being in pain . . . However I've only linked lovemaking and excessive joy to complete disrespect, to the radical denial of whatever delays inner freedom.

My desire today is focused on a *point*. This object—without objective truth and yet the most shattering that I can imagine—I compare with a smile, with the limpidity of the beloved. No embrace could attain this limpidity (it is precisely *that which slips away* at the moment of possession). This point is lacerated by the desire that I've *seen* beyond the desired presence, whose sweetness is found in despair.

I recognized this object: I've been waiting for it forever. We recognize the beloved by this impression of a response: the beloved is the being we've been awaiting, who fills the void (the universe is no longer intelligible without the beloved). But this woman whom I hold in my arms escapes me, I attempt in vain to rediscover in my embrace the impression that changed into a certainty, of a response to my expectation: only absence continues to attain this impression *through the feeling of a lack*.

Whatever I may have said before (at the moment in which I'm writing, I can't remember precisely), today it seems to me that, speaking of reminiscence, Proust offered a faithful description of this object.

This object, perceived in ecstasy, but in a calm lucidity, differs to some extent from the beloved. It is that which, in the beloved, leaves the lacerating impression—but intimate and ungraspable—of *déjà vu*.

It seems to me that the singular narrative that is *In Search of Lost Time*—in which life slowly breaks down and dissolves in inanity (in an inability to be grasped) and yet grasping the ocellar points in which it resolves itself—that it has the truth of a sob.

Sobbing signifies broken communication. When communication—the sweetness of intimate communication—is broken by death, separation, or disagreement, I feel growing in myself, in the laceration, the less familiar gentleness of a sob. But the gentleness of a sob differs substantially from that which preceded it. In established communication, *charm* is canceled by habit. It is comparable in sobs to the spark that is caused by pulling an electrical cord out of the wall. It is precisely because communication is broken that we feel it as a tragedy when we weep.

Proust thought that he had retained in memory that which had however escaped. Memory completely reveals that which presence slipped away but only for a time. It's true that, in a sense, human sobs have the aftertaste of eternity.

How I admire the ruse—undoubtedly conscious—with which *Time Regained* lets what others locate as the infinite fall within the limits of a teacup. If one (André Breton) speaks of a *dazzling and blind interior . . . whose soul is no more ice than fire . . .*³ there remains in the fulguration thus evoked something great and transcendent that maintains, even within a human being,

the relationship of superiority of man to God. The uneasiness introduced in this way is undoubtedly hardly inevitable. We only become unhinged through laceration. My intention is hardly to shy away from moments of transcendence (which *Time Regained* disguises). But human transcendence, so it seems to me, is expressly negative. I don't have the power to put any object *above* me—in order to apprehend it or to be lacerated by it—other than nothingness, which is nothing. What gives the impression of transcendence—touching some part of being—is that our perception of it is mediated by nothingness. We only get beyond the particular being that we are through the laceration of nothingness. Nothingness overpowers us, it strikes us down, and we are tempted to offer that which we divine in its darkness the power to dominate us. Consequently, one of the most human moments is to reduce to our scale objects perceived to be beyond collapse. These objects are not flattened, but a movement of sovereign simplicity reveals their intimacy.

Transcendence must be destroyed by laughter. Just as a child abandoned to the frightening beyond of himself suddenly recognizes the intimate gentleness of his mother—then he responds to her with laughter—just as if a nonchalant ingenuity discovers a game in trembling, I burst into illuminated laughter, but I laugh that much more than I trembled.

It is difficult to speak of so strange (certainly so fortunate) a laughter. It supports this nothingness that the tiny figure of God (image of man) used as an infinite pedestal. At every moment, my anguish tears me out of myself, out of my minor concerns and abandons me to this nothingness.

In this nothingness in which I exist—questioning to the point of nausea, I receive no answer that does not seem to extend the void, double the interrogation—I distinguish nothing: God seems to me no less empty an answer than the “nature” of a crude materialism. Nonetheless I cannot deny the possibilities offered to those who form an image of this God: the experience of Him exists humanly; his stories are familiar to us.

The moment came when my audacity—or if you will my nonchalance—asked me: “Couldn't you *yourself* have this senseless experience—then laugh about it?” I answered: “Impossible: I don't have *the faith!*” In the silence in which I was in a truly mad state of availability, I remained perched over the void, everything appeared equally laughable to me, hideous, *possible* . . . At that moment I passed beyond. Suddenly I *recognized* God.

That which an infinite laughter provoked could not be any less comforting.

I threw myself at the feet of the old ghost.

We ordinarily have a poor idea of His majesty: I had a revelation of it without measure.

The darkness became an infinite black beard, coming out of the depths of the earth and the hideousness of blood.

I laughed.

It was infinitely more ponderous.

But my lightness effortlessly went to the end of this infinite ponderousness: it gave back to nothingness what is only nothingness.

Outside of freedom, of laughter itself, there is nothing at which I laugh less divinely than *God*.

II

We want to be the inheritors of all ancient morality and not to begin again. All our activity is moral only when it turns against its ancient form.

1880–1884⁴

It seemed to me that some of my friends confused their concern for a desirable value with contempt inspired by baseness. The value (or the object of moral aspiration) is inaccessible. Human beings of all kinds can be loved. I see them—each like the others—with a rebellious sympathy. I no longer see an ideal, facing degradation. The collapse of great numbers of people is poignant, sad like a prison; heroic ardor, moral strictness have a suffocating narrowness for them. Often obtuse strictness is the sign of a relaxation (among saccharine Christians or effusive activists). I love only love, desire . . .⁵

In our categorical condemnations, when we call someone an “ass,” forgetting the bitter depths of our own heart, we only bring ourselves closer, through a rather vile indifference, to the clear-sighted indifference that we denounce. Similarly, with the police, society brings itself closer to the processes that it condemns.

Complicity in crime, then in blindness to crime, unites humanity most tightly.

Union nourishes incessant hostility. In excessive love, I must not only want to kill but not to weaken upon sight of it. If I could, I would fall down and cry out in despair. But rejecting despair, continuing to live happily, playfully (without reason), I love in a harder way, more truly, as life is worth being loved.

Lover’s luck is the evil (the disequilibrium) to which physical love constrains them. They are endlessly condemned to destroy the harmony

between themselves, to fight in the night. This is the price of a struggle, through the wounds that they cause one another they are united.

Moral value is the object of desire: that for which we might die. This is not always an “object” (with a definite existence). Desire is often focused on an undefined presence. It is possible to oppose God and a beloved woman in a parallel way; and in other way, nothingness, female nakedness (independent of a particular woman).

Logically, the indefinite has a negative sign.

I hate relaxed laughter, the smiling intelligence of “wits.”

Nothing is however more foreign to me than bitter laughter.

I laugh naively, *divinely*. I don’t laugh when I am sad; and, when I laugh, I’m having fun.

Embarrassed at having laughed (with friends) at the crimes of Doctor Petiot.⁶ The laughter that undoubtedly has the summit for an object is born of our lack of awareness of it. Like my friends, I am moved by a nameless horror to a senseless hilarity. Beyond laughter, encountering death, desire (love), swooning, ecstasy linked to some impression of horror, to some transfigured horror. I no longer laugh in that beyond: I hold onto a feeling of laughter. A laughter that attempted to persist, seeking to force the beyond, would be “intended” and sound false, lacking naïveté. Spontaneous laughter, without reserve, opens on the worst and maintains in the worst (death) a light feeling of wonder (at the devil God, blasphemies, or transcensions! The universe is humble: my laughter is its innocence).

Laughter blesses and God curses. Man is not, as God is, condemned to condemn. Laughter is, if you will, wonderful, it can be light, *it can bless*. If I laugh at myself . . .

Petiot said of his clients (according to Q.):

“I think you are anemic. You need calcium.”

He would make appointments for them, for calcium treatments, on rue Lesueur.

If I said that the periscope on rue Lesueur was the *summit*?

I would be sickened by horror, by disgust.

Would the *approach* to the summit be recognizable in the horror, in the disgust that grips us?

Do only crude, primitive types give in to their compulsion for the “periscope”?

From the *theological* point of view, a “periscope” is analogous to Calvary. In both cases, a *sinner gets off on* the effects of *his* crime. He contents himself with imagining it if he is devout. But the crucifixion, this crime, is *his* crime: it links repentance with the act. Perversion for them resides in the slippage of consciousness, in the involuntary evasion of the act, in the lack of virility, in the flight.⁷

Not long before the war, I dreamed of being struck by lightning. I felt a wrenching, a great terror. At the same moment, I was filled with wonder, transfigured: I was dying.

Today, I feel the same surge. If I wanted “everything to be alright,” if I asked for moral assurances, I would feel the foolishness of my joy. On the contrary, I’m intoxicated by not wanting anything and not having assurances. I experience a feeling of freedom. But even though this surge leads toward death, it doesn’t free me from a life that suits me. On the contrary, I feel lightened of the concerns that gnaw at life (link it to definite conceptions). A tiny thing—or nothing—intoxicates me. A condition of this intoxication is that I laugh, principally at myself.⁸

III

The greatest, most certain love might coincide with infinite mockery. Such a love would resemble the most insane music, the ravishment of the lucid being.

My passion for love opens on death like a window on a courtyard.

To the extent that it makes death present—like the comical tearing up of a theater set—love has the power to wrench open the skies. Everything is simple! Through the wrenching, I see: as if I were the accomplice of all the nonsense of the world, the empty and free depths appear.

How could the beloved differ from this empty freedom, from the infinite transparency of what is freed at last from the burden of a meaning?

In this annihilating freedom, dizziness is changed into ravishment. Into calm ravishment.

The strength (or the movement of freedom) of the beloved, the violence, anguish, and the long wait for love, the nervous intolerance of the lovers contribute in no way to this resolution in emptiness.

Emptiness delivers from attachments: there are no stops in emptiness. If I put emptiness in front of me, I immediately see the beloved: there is *nothing* there. What I loved desperately was the breech, the open door.

A sudden movement, a cutoff demand annihilating the ponderous world.⁹

IV

And how many new ideals are, at bottom, still possible!—Here is a little ideal I stumble upon once every five weeks on a wild and lonely walk, in an azure moment of sinful happiness. To spend one's life amid delicate and absurd things; a stranger to reality; half an artist, half a bird and metaphysician; with no care for reality, except now and then to acknowledge it in the manner of a good dancer with the tips of one's toes; always tickled by some sun ray of happiness; exuberant and encouraged even by misery—for misery preserves the happy man; fixing a little humorous tail even to the holiest of things: this, as is obvious, is the ideal of a heavy, hundredweight spirit—a spirit of gravity.

March–July 1888¹⁰

This morning I woke up in a good mood.¹¹
No one, obviously, is more *irreligious*, more joyful than I.

I no longer want to speak of *inner* (or mystical) *experience* but of *impalement*. You might similarly say Zen. I find it joyful to give a specific kind of experience a name—as one does with flowers.

Impalement is different from Zen. A little. Clownishness even. What's more, like Zen, difficult to define.¹²

It was pure acrobatics on my part to say, on this subject, *torture* (I had to do it with such seriousness, such truthfulness, such fever, that people were contemptuous: but the contemptuousness was necessary and that the joke *be true*).

Today, I insist on saying *impalement*.

From the outset, teaching the practice of *impalement* is a comical task. It implies a conviction: that one can *teach impalement*.

However I teach . . .

That *impalement* should be the victim of an inaccessible summit, is that not the fundamental truth?

A possibility of thin jokes disgusts me: they won't be lacking on *impalement* and *Proust* . . .

From the moment you take it for what it is—the fall of God (of transcendence) into ridiculousness (immediacy, immanence): a *teacup* is *impalement*.¹³

The double nature of the summit (horror and delight, anguish and ecstasy). Expressed in stark contrast in the two volumes—black and white—of *Time Regained*: horror on one side of a squalid hotel, moments of bliss on the other.

Different moments of bliss:

- the diffuse, impersonal, objectless joy of *yoga*;
- lacerating raptures, breathless trances;
- and again more of the emptiness of the night.

These moments correspond to untroubled transparency, to so-called *theopathic* states.

In these states of ungraspable transparency, the mind is inert, intensely lucid and free. The universe easily passes through it. The object is imposed on it in an “intimate and ungraspable impression of *déjà vu*.”

This impression of *déjà vu* (of being penetrable in every way and yet unintelligible) defines, for me, the *theopathic state*.

No more shadow of divine importunity. Obviously!

For the mystic (the believer), God undoubtedly becomes volatile: the mystic himself is god.

It amuses me, sometimes, to present myself to myself as God.

In *theopathy*, it's different. This state, and it alone, is comical in the extreme, in that it is infinite volatilization, effortless freedom, reducing all things to a movement in which they fall.

Expressing myself on a state designated by a shorthand name (*impalement*), I am writing these few lines in the form of a theme for meditation:

*I imagine: an object of attraction,
The flame
Shining and light
Consuming itself in itself
Annihilating itself
And in this way revealing emptiness,
The identity of the attraction,
Of that which intoxicates
And of the void;*

*I imagine
Emptiness
Identical to the flame,
The suppression of the object
Revealing the flame
That intoxicates
And illuminates.*

No practice can take you to the goal . . .

In any case, I think that it's suffering, devastating the being, exhausting it, which opens such an intimate wound.

This state of immanence is impiety itself.

Perfect impiety is the negation of nothingness (of the power of nothingness): nothing has a hold on me any longer—neither transcendence nor the time to come (no more waiting).¹⁴

Not speaking of God signifies that one fears God; that one is not yet at ease with Him (His image or His place in the linkages of the real, of language . . .); that one has put off until later examining the emptiness that He represents, piercing it with one's laughter.

Laughing at God, at that before which multitudes have trembled, requires the simplicity, the naive malice of a child. Nothing heavy or sick remains.

Impalement is laughter but so sharp that nothing remains of it. Immensity pierced through, muscles moving, far from carrying transparency to infinity, shatters it . . . Even the indifferent smile of a Buddha would be heavy (painful personal insistence). Only an insistence on the leap, a nimble *lightness* (autonomy, freedom even) gives laughter a limitless dominion.

Similarly, the transparency of two beings is disturbed by a carnal exchange.

I'm obviously speaking of acute states.

I frequently burst into laughter and I . . .¹⁵

I've been called "God's widower," "inconsolable widower" . . .

But I laugh. The word returns endlessly under my pen, so they say that my laughter is forced.

I am simultaneously amused and saddened by the misunderstanding.

My laughter is joyful.

I've said that a tide of laughter swept me away when I was twenty . . .¹⁶ I felt I was dancing with light. At the same time I surrendered to the delights of a free sensuality.

Seldom has the world laughed more fully at someone who laughed at the world.

I remember having claimed at that time, upon arriving in the square, that the dome in Sienna made me laugh.

"It's impossible," they said to me, "beauty isn't laughable."

I couldn't convince them.

And yet, in that square, I laughed, happy as a child, dazzled by the dome in the July sun.

I laughed at the pleasure of living, at my Italian sensuality—the sweetest and cleverest that I have known. And I laughed to discover how,

in this sunny country, life played with Christianity, changing the anemic monk into the princess from the *Thousand and One Nights*.

Surrounded by pink, black, and white palaces, the Sienna cathedral is comparable to an immense, multicolored, golden cake (in questionable taste).

V

In the end, I have more than one face. And I don't know which one is laughing at the other.¹⁷

Love is so exorbitant a feeling that I take my head in my hands: isn't this dream kingdom, born of passion, fundamentally a lie. In the end, the "features" dissipate. Nothing remains in the location of a laceration in the fabric of things—lacerating laceration—but a person inserted into the weave of the fabric.

Layers of dead leaves are not steps to a throne, and tugboats' horns disperse illusions of enchantment.

However, what answer would the magnificence of the world give if no one could speak to us, communicating an undoubtedly indecipherable message:¹⁸ "This fate that befalls you, which you regard as your own (that of this man, who you are) or as that of being in general (of the immensity of which you are a part), you see it now, nothing will permit it to be reduced to the poverty of things—which are only what they are. On the contrary, each time there is an accidental lie, or something is transfigured, don't you hear the appeal to which nothing in you leaves without response? You cannot say that you wanted this odyssey, only *that you are it*. Who would challenge its distance, extremity, and desirability? Desirable? Am I equal to the enigma? If, seeing me, you hadn't chosen this inaccessible goal; you wouldn't even have approached the enigma!"

Night undoubtedly falls, but in the aggravation of desire.

I hate lies (poetic foolishness). But the desire within us has never lied. There is a sickness in desire that often makes us see an abyss between the imagined object and the real object. It's true, the beloved differs from my conception of the lover. What's worse is that the identity of the real with the object of desire assumes, so it seems, amazing luck.

Contrary to which is the obvious magnificence of the universe that reverses the idea that we make ourselves from this chance. *If nothing in us veils the splendor of the skies, we are worthy of infinite love.* The beloved

would not emerge from a prosaic reality like a miracle from a series of determinate facts. The luck that transfigures the beloved is only the absence of misfortune. The universe, acting in us, denies itself in the common unfolding of misfortune (dull existence) and affirms itself in the choice elect.

The universe, compared to the beloved, seems impoverished and empty: it is not “at risk,” not being “perishable.”

But the beloved is beloved only for a single individual.

Carnal love, which is not “sheltered from thieves,” from vicissitudes, is greater than divine love.

It puts me “at risk,” puts the beloved at risk.

God, by definition, is not at risk.

The lover of God, whatever ardor his passion attains in him, conceives God as withdrawn from risk, beyond grace (in the beatitude of the elect).

And undoubtedly, it’s true that a woman’s lover can’t stop—suppress the torture of absence—until he has her under his roof, in his possession. It’s true that, most often, love is extinguished in wanting to elude its nature, which wants it to remain at risk . . .

Who does not see that happiness is the hardest test for lovers? The voluntary refusal would nevertheless be fabricated, would make of love a subtlety, desired for itself with artistry (I can imagine lovers voluntarily maintaining difficult conditions). There remains a chance, however small, of surpassing, exhausting happiness.

Chance has the same origin (*cadentia*) as expiration.¹⁹ *Chance* is that which expires, which falls (originally good or bad luck). It’s randomness, the *fall* of the die.

Hence this comical idea: I propose a *hyperchristianity*!

In the popular perception of things, it is no longer man who falls and separates himself from God, it’s God himself (or if you prefer, totality).

God here implies “nothing less than his idea implies.” On the contrary, more. But this “more” is suppressed insofar as it is God, from the fact that his essence is to “be at risk,” to “put Himself at risk.” In the end, man remains alone.

In comical terms, this is *generalized incarnation*!

But in the fall of the universal into humanity, this is no longer a question, as it was with Jesus, of an odious comedy of “risk taking” (God only fictitiously abandons Jesus). The abandonment of risk is total.

What I love in the beloved—to the point of desiring to die from this love—is not the particular being, but the share of the universal in that being. But this share is at risk, puts me at risk.

On the popular level of these ideas, God himself is particular (God is not me), but animals aren't at risk (only out of play).

How ponderous, how grandiloquent this being is compared to the *being that falls*, into a "teacup," in a human being.

Ponderousness is the price of impatience, of the thirst for security.

To speak of the *absolute*: an ignoble, inhuman word.

It's the aspiration of worms.

I don't want to deify anyone. But I laugh when god falls from his insipidity into the precariousness of the ungraspable.

A woman has handkerchiefs, a bed, stockings. She lingers for a moment at home or in a wood. Nothing is changed if I see her transparently as what she truly is: risk, chance itself. Her truth is not above her. Like the "teacup," however, I only reach her in rare lucky moments. She is the voice through which the world answers me. But without infinite attention—without a transparency linked to the exhausting excess of suffering—I wouldn't understand a thing.

In carnal love, we ought to love an excess of suffering. Without this excess, we could not put ourselves at risk. In divine love, the limit of suffering is found in divine perfection.

I love the irreligiousness, the disrespect of gambling.

Gambling puts so much on the line that at certain moments, I even lose the possibility of anguish. Anguish then would be the withdrawal of risk. I must love. I must let myself go in happiness, intuiting chance. And win, in the rapture of letting go, cruelly, the profit in this game that exhausts me.

To nourish the bitterness implied in those last words of new anguish would be to turn away from taking risks.

I cannot be at risk without the anguish that gives me the feeling of being in suspense. But to take risks means to overcome anguish.

I am afraid that this apology only serves foolish ends, grandiloquence. Love is simple and unspoken.

I wish that in the love of the unknown—which proceeds, as I understand it, from mystical traditions—we reached, through the eviction of transcendence, so great a simplicity that this love linked itself with terrestrial love—*infinitely reflecting it*.²⁰

VI

In the end what remains *unknown* is that which at the same moment *I recognize*: it is myself, suspended at the moment of certainty, myself in the appearance of the beloved, of the sound of a spoon, or of the void.

From the beginning the beloved is strangely confused with me. But barely glimpsed, this was ungraspable. I really searched, found, and embraced . . . And I really knew . . . I have no doubts; but how, if I had been able to drown this anguish in sensuality, could I have endured the test of desire?

Pain arises from the beloved's refusal of love. The beloved turns away, differs from me.

But without this difference, without the abyss, *my recognition of the beloved would have been in vain . . .* Identity remains at risk. The response to the desire that is given to us is only true if *ungraspable*. A comprehensible response destroys desire. These limits define desire (and define us). We exist to the extent that we are at risk. If risk ceases, if I withdraw an element in order to stabilize it, all equity would be false: I pass from the tragic to the laughable.

All beings are fundamentally only one.²¹

Beings push each other back at the same time that they are one. And in this movement—which is their essence—annul fundamental identity.

An impression of *déjà vu* signifies a stop—sudden and hardly lasting—of the essential repulsion.

The repulsion is, in us, what is fallen, the stabilized element. In isolation, stability is a disequilibrium, like every *state*.

Our desire defines chance: it is the transparency, the place where opacity is resolved. (Physical beauty is transparency, but passive; active, virile ugliness creates transparency by reversing it).

Transparency is not the suppression but the surpassing of individual isolation. It is not a theoretical or fundamental *state* of unity; it is chance in play.

Chance commingles with a feeling of *déjà vu*.

It is not the pure *unified being* that is the object of chance but the separated being, before chance alone, owing to *chance*, as a separated being, its power to deny separation. But this negation assumes the *encounter* with the beloved. It is only effective before the other, assuming equal luck in the other.

Love is this negation of the *unified being* that chance affects, revealing separation in one sense, only raising it up for the chosen beloved.

The beloved chosen in this election is a surpassing of the universe, the splendor of which would be that of the *unified being* without risk. But its luck—which it is—assumes love. To say of the beloved that this person really differs from that which love attributes to her reveals a common fault of judgments about beings. The beloved is *in* the love. To exist for one other individual, to exist for a crowd, to exist for an indefinite number of “acquaintances,” so many different realities, equally real. Love, a crowd, a social set are realities upon which our existence depends.

In love, chance is first what the lover seeks in the beloved. But chance is also found in the encounter between the two. Love unites them and is in a sense a festival of the return to *unified being*. It possesses at the same time, but to a supreme degree, the opposite character of *being suspended*, in autonomy, in the surpassing of risk.

VII

I hate monks.

To my way of thinking, to give up the world, chance, the truth of bodies, would cause shame.

There is no greater sin.

Happy to recall the night when I drank and danced—danced alone, like a peasant, like a faun, surrounded by couples.

Alone? In fact, we were dancing face to face, in a *potlatch* of absurdity, *the philosopher*—Sartre—and me.

I recall having danced, whirling around.

And leaping up and stomping down on the wooden floor.

In a feeling of defiance, of comical folly.

This dance—in front of Sartre—gets caught up in me with a memory of a painting (Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*). The third character was a dummy formed by a horse's skull and a large dressing gown with yellow and mauve stripes. A sad, gothic, canopied bed presided over the fun.

Five months of nightmare ended in a carnival.

What strangeness for me to be associated with Sartre and Camus (speaking like a schoolboy).

On the other hand, the relationship that I have with Zen monks doesn't encourage me (they don't dance, don't drink, don't . . .).

Among those who think joyfully (freely), Zen is the object of a hasty confidence. The most seductive of Zen monks were chaste.²²

April–June 1944

The Position of Chance

To what extent is the destruction of morality by itself still a test of its own strength? We other Europeans, we have in ourselves the blood of those who died for their faith; we have taken morality terribly seriously; there is nothing we have not sacrificed to it. What's more, we owe our intellectual refinement principally to the vivisection of our consciousness. We still don't know the directions in which we will be pushed, once we have left our ancient territory. But this soil itself has brought us the strength that now pushes us on distant adventures, toward countries without borders, that have not yet been discovered or exploited; we have no choice, we must be conquerors since we no longer have a country in which we feel at home, where we would like to "stay." A hidden affirmation pushes us, an affirmation stronger than all of our negations. Our strength itself does not permit us to remain on this ancient and decomposed soil; we'll risk the departure, we'll put ourselves at risk; the world is still rich and unknown and it would be better to perish than to become weak and venomous. Our vigor pushes us toward the high seas, toward the point at which all the suns till now have set; we know that there is a new world . . .

1885–1886¹

I

?I am acting in such a way that the moment for which I long, that I await, so to speak, in tears, escapes me. For that, I surpass my means. No traces in memory or very little. I do not write this in disappointment or anger but, like a drawn arrow, certain of reaching the end.

What I am saying here is intelligible on this condition: that one has the taste for a purity so true as to be unlivable.

The infinite misunderstanding: what I love—or, like a lark, I sing out my joy to the sun—I must say in depressing terms.

II

Going back, I copy pages more than a year old: in January 1943, arriving in V., I described the chance of which I speak for the first time:

³How boring it is to think so much and so much—about everything possible. The future envisioned as a weight. But:

What skill I have in putting everything in doubt, tied up with anguish (nothing doesn't come into play, in particular the necessity of having resources, this linked to the pathos of the *Phenomenology of Mind*—to the class struggle: I would eat if . . . At the beginning of 1943, the pathos of the events comes to my aide—especially events to come), nothing would excuse me to fail my feelings (deep in my heart: lightness, a surge).

No one is more lacerated by insight than I: intuiting the infinite, making no exceptions, holding anguish to the rights, the anger, the rage of poverty. How can I not give *all strength* to poverty: Poverty could not, however, shatter the dance of my heart that laughs in the depths of despair.

Hegelian dialectic. Today it is impossible for me to be, between two points, only a hyphen, only a leap, which itself, for a moment, rests on nothing.

The leap played across two scenes. Stendhal gaily sapped his resources (the society upon which his resources relied). Then comes the reckoning.

In the reckoning, the characters in the air between the two points are suppressed.

Two representations contradict one another. I reveal myself in the first paragraph, free of the anguish of reckoning.

But then:

The leap is life; the reckoning is death.

And if history stops, I die.

Or:

Beyond all reckoning, a new kind of leap? If history is finished, a leap outside of time? Crying out forever: *Time out of joints*.⁴

In a state of extreme anguish—then of decisiveness—I wrote these poems:

*⁵And I cry out
unhinged
what is
hopeless*

*in my heart is hidden
a dead mouse⁶*

*the mouse dies
hunted down*

*and in my hand the world is dead
the old candle blown out
before I go to bed*

*sickness the death of the world
I am the sickness
I am the death of the world.⁷*

*Silence in my heart
at the violent gust of wind
my temples throbbing with death
and a black star falls
in my erect skeleton*

*black
silence I invade the sky
black my mouth is an arm⁸
black
writing on a wall in flames
black
the empty wind of the tomb
whistles in my head.*

*The mad silence of a step
the silence of a hiccup
where is the earth where the sky*

*and the distraught sky
I go mad*

*I deceive the world and I die
I forget and I bury it
in the tomb of my bones.*

*O my absent
death's head eyes.⁹*

¹⁰*Hope
O my rocking horse
in the darkness a giant
I am this giant
on a rocking horse.*

*Starry sky
my sister
cursed men
star you are death
the light of a great cold*

*solitude of lightning
absence of humanity at last
I empty myself of memories
a desert sun
effaces my name*

*star I see
its silence ice
it cries out like a wolf
on my back I fall to the ground
it kills me I guess.¹¹*

*O the dice thrown
from the depths of the tomb
in the fingers of the delicate night*

*dice from birds of sunlight
leaps from the drunk lark
me like an arrow
out of the night*

*o transparency of bones
my heart drunk with sunlight
is the shaft of the night.¹²*

III

¹³I'm ashamed of myself. I'm soft, easily swayed . . . I'm getting old. Some years ago, I was tough, bold, a leader. That's undoubtedly over with, and perhaps it was superficial. Action, affirmation entailed little risk in those days!

My resilience seems to me to be shattered:
war denied my hopes (nothing happens outside political machines);
I've been diminished by an illness;
a continual anguish ends up shaking my nerves (I can no longer regard the circumstance as a weakness);
I feel reduced, on a moral level, to silence (the summit cannot be affirmed, no one can speak in its name).

In opposition to this is a consciousness that is sure of itself: if any chance of action exists, I will risk it, not as a secondary risk but risking my life. Even older, sick, and feverish, I have an active character. I cannot endlessly keep up the infinite (monstrous) sterility that comes with fatigue.¹⁴

(In the current conditions of my life, if I let myself go for a moment, my head spins. At five o'clock in the morning, I'm cold, my heart heavy. I can only try to sleep.¹⁵)

Life? Death? Sometimes I cast a bitter glance at the worst; I place my bet, no longer able to slip into the horror. And I know that all is lost; that the coming dawn, which might enlighten me, will in the end shine on a dead man.

In me, all things laugh blindly at life. I walk through life with a childish lightness; I bear it.

I listen to the rain falling.

My melancholy, the threat of death, and this kind of fear, that destroys but indicates a summit, I stir them up in myself, all of this haunts me, suffocates me . . . but I am—we are going on.

IV

¹⁶I surprise myself by falling into anguish and yet!
I don't stop taking risks: this is the condition of the intoxication of the heart.

But it is to measure the nauseating depths of things: to gamble is to touch the limit, to go as far as possible, and to live on the edge of an abyss!

A free spirit, wanting to be free, chooses between asceticism and risk. Asceticism is risk in the opposite chance, a negation of the risk itself reversed. The ascetic, it's true, renounces, withdraws from the game, but his retreat itself is a form of risk.

Similarly, risk is a kind of renunciation. The sum staked by the authentic gambler is lost as a "resource": never to be "gambled" again. If he loses, that's it. If he wins, the winnings, added to the first stake, are the supplement for new stakes and nothing else. In gambling, money "burns a hole in your pocket." The heat of the game *consecrates* it to gambling. (Using formulas or mathematical speculation is opposed to gambling as the calculation of probabilities is to chance.)

Similarly, when I'm burning with desire—and intoxicated by it—when the pursuit of its object becomes my risk, fundamentally, I don't have the slightest hope. Possession, like a gambler's winnings, extends desire—or extinguishes it. "Henceforth, for me, there is no rest!"

Romanticism opposes a *sanctity* of risk to the risks of the ascetic that makes monks and abstainers insipid.

"Honor that much more the failure that is failure . . ." So Nietzsche says of remorse in *Ecce Homo*.¹⁷

Nietzsche's doctrines are strange in this way: in that one cannot follow them. They put imprecise, often dazzling hints in front of us: no path leads in the indicated direction.

Nietzsche: prophet of new paths? But *superman*, *eternal return* are empty as motives for exaltation or action. Without effect compared to Christian motives, or Buddhist ones. The *will to power* is itself a poor subject of meditation. Having it is good but reflecting on it?

What Nietzsche perceived: the falseness of preachers who say, “do this or that,” depicting evil, exhorting struggle. “My experience,” he says (*Ecce Homo*), “knows nothing of ‘willing’ something, ‘striving’ for something, envisioning a ‘purpose,’ a wish.”¹⁸ Nothing is more contrary to the *propaganda* of Buddhism or Christianity.

Compared to Zarathustra, Jesus and Buddha seem servile. They have something to do in this world, even an overpowering task. They were only “wise,” “learned,” “saviors.” Zarathustra (Nietzsche) is more: a seducer, laughing at the tasks he undertook.

Imagine a friend of Zarathustra presenting himself at a monastery, being refused, sitting in the entryway, awaiting acceptance from the goodwill of the superiors. And this is not only about being humble, lowering one’s head without laughing: Buddhists, like Christians, take seriously what this began—the commitment, *whatever desire there might be*, to no longer have carnal knowledge of women! Jesus, Buddha had something to do in this world: they assigned to their disciples a dry and obligatory task.

In the end, the student of Zarathustra only learns to disavow his master: he is told to hate his master and to “pluck at his laurels.”¹⁹ The danger for the follower is not the prophet’s “live dangerously,” but not having anything to do in this world.

From two things one: you do not *believe* in what you can do (what you actually do but *without faith*)—or you are not a student of Zarathustra, who assigns no tasks.

²⁰Overheard a household conversation at the café where I was eating. The owner’s argument, a (young and silly) husband: “Why does she pout like that?” The wife enters the room, with a tight smile.

Everywhere the discordance of things explodes. But isn’t that desirable? And even the discord—open in me like a wound—between K.²¹ and I, the endless flight stealing away my life, endlessly leaving me in the state of a man falling from some unexpected step, I feel it in my depths and, despite my fear, I want it. When K. slips before my eyes and gives me an absent look,

I sometimes become painfully aware of a burning complicity in myself. And similarly today, perhaps on the eve of some personal disaster, I recognize a base desire, an expectation of coming tests (independent from their results).

If, in order to express my feelings, I had recourse to music, an explosion—undoubtedly frail—would result, at the same time as a soft and delirious swelling, a movement of joy so wild, and yet of such abandon, that one could no more say if I was dying or laughing.²²

V

²³Suddenly the moment comes—difficulties, bad luck, and great disappointed enthusiasms—to which is added the threat of tests: I vacillate and remain alone; I no longer know how to bear life.

Or rather, I do know: I will harden myself, laugh at my failure, follow my way as before. But now my nerves are raw and, wrecked from drinking, I am unhappy to be alone and waiting. This torment is unbearable in that it is not the result of any misfortune and is due only to the disappearance of chance.

(Chance, fragile and always at risk, fascinates me, exhausts me.)

Now I'm going to harden myself, follow my way (I've already begun). This is on the condition of action! I am writing this page with great care, as if the task might be worth the trouble.

On the condition of action!

Having something to do!

If not, how can I harden myself? How will I bear this emptiness, this sensation of inanity, of thirst that nothing will quench? But what can I do if not write precisely this, this book in which I have recounted my disappointment (my despair) at having nothing to do in this world?

At the depth of failure (light, it's true), I sense something.

It cannot be defined.

I imagine an arduous path, marked with trials, in which the illusion of my chance won't forsake me. I imagine the inevitable, all the events to come.

In laceration and nausea, in failings, in which my knees go weak, and, right at the moment of death, I take a risk.

The chance that falls to me and, without weariness, renews itself, each day that came before me

like a herald before a knight²⁴

that nothing ever limits, that I evoke when I write²⁵

*myself like an arrow
out of the night*

this chance binds me to someone I love, for better or for worse, must be risked to the very end.

And if it so happens that someone sees chance beside me, that chance should be taken!

It's not *my* chance, it belongs to whoever takes it.

No one can grasp it any more than I can.

Nothing about it can be known, but it can be taken.

But who can see it without taking it?

Whoever you are, reading me: take *your* chance.

As I do, without rushing it, just as at this moment, while writing, *I gamble with you.*

This chance is neither yours nor mine. It is the chance of all human beings and their light.

Has it ever had the vividness that the night now gives it?

No one, other than K. and M. (and yet), can know the meaning of these verses (or the previous):

*dice from birds of sunlight . . .*²⁶

(They are *also*, on another level, empty of meaning.)

I gamble at the edge of an abyss so great that only the depths of a dream, a nightmare of dying can define it.

But gambling is first of all not taking things seriously. And dying . . .

Beside risk or chance, a particular assertion seems empty and inopportune.

It's a pity to limit something that is essentially limitless: chance, risk.

I can think: K. or X. cannot gamble without me (the reciprocal is true, I cannot gamble without K. or X.). There's nothing definite about this (if not, "take your chances" is "find yourself"; "find yourself" is "find out what chance you were"; "the chance that you were" can only be reached "in gambling").

And now?

If I define a kind of person worthy of love—I only want to be partially understood.

Definition betrays desire. It aims for an inaccessible summit. The summit slips away from any conception of it. It is *what it is*, never *what it*

should be. Assigning the summit reduces it to the convenience of a being, relates it to the interests of that individual. In religion, this is salvation—of the self and others.

Two definitions from Nietzsche:

1. "*Elevated moods*—It seems to me that most people simply do not believe in elevated moods, unless they last for moments only or at most a quarter of an hour—except for those few who know firsthand the longer duration of elevated feelings. But to be a human being with one elevated feeling—to be a single great mood incarnate—that has hitherto been a mere dream and a delightful possibility; as yet history does not offer us any certain examples. Nevertheless, history might one day give birth to such people, too—once a great many favorable preconditions have been created and determined that even the dice throws of the luckiest chance could not bring together today. What has so far entered our souls only now and then as an exception that made us shudder, might perhaps be the usual state for these future souls: a perpetual movement between high and low, the feeling of high and low, a continual sense of ascending stairs and at the same time of resting on clouds."

The Gay Science § 288

2. "For the soul that has the longest ladder and reaches down deepest . . .

The most spacious soul, which can run and stray and roam the farthest within itself,

The most necessary soul, which out of sheer joy hurls itself into chance,

The soul that exists and wants to plunge into becoming, the soul that has and wants to throw itself into wanting and desire,

The soul that flees itself and catches up with itself in the widest circuit,

The wisest soul, to which foolishness speaks sweetest,

The soul that loves itself the most, in which all things have their current and counter-current and ebb and flow."

Zarathustra, Of Old and New Tablets, § 19

The factual existence of these kinds of souls cannot be denied without reason.

They would differ from the mystics in that they would gamble and could not be the effect of an effort speculating on a result.

I don't know what addressing this provocation at K. means.

I nevertheless can't avoid it.

For it is the actual truth.

"You are like a part of myself, a piece of living flesh. If you fail your own heights, I am uneasy. In another way, it's a relief, but if we fail each other, we do so on the condition of having a scale of heights (we can, we must turn away from ourselves, but only if, once, we go to the end and, no longer keeping score, we risk ourselves). I know that there is no kind of *obligation* in the world; I nevertheless cannot annul in myself the embarrassment resulting from the fear of risk."

All told, everyone, no matter who, is a part of me.

Fortunately, this isn't normally tangible.

But love brings this truth to life.

There is nothing left in me that does not limp, nothing that does not burn, and live—or die—from hope.

I am for those whom I love a provocation. I can only bear to see them forget the *chance* that they would be *if they were playing*.²⁷

A *senseless* hope arouses me.

I see before me a kind of flame, which I am, which sets me on fire.

". . . I'd like to hurt those for whom I shine . . ."²⁸

Unable to *do* anything, I survive on laceration, following with my eyes the glimmering light that plays with me.

"If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one's system, one could hardly reject altogether the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely a medium of overpowering forces. The concept of revelation—in the sense that suddenly, with indescribable certainly and subtlety, something becomes *visible*, audible, something that shakes one to the last depths and throws one down—that merely describes the facts. One hears, one does not seek; one accepts, one does not ask who gives; like lightning, a thought flashes up, with necessity, without hesitation regarding its form—I never had any choice. A rapture whose tremendous tension occasionally discharges itself in a flood of tears—now the pace quickens involuntarily, now it becomes slow; one is altogether outside of oneself, with the distinct consciousness of countless shudders of one's skin creeping down to one's toes; a depth of happiness in which even what is most painful

and gloomy does not seem something opposite but rather conditioned, provoked, *an indispensable* color in such a superabundance of light . . .”
Ecce Homo, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, § 3.²⁹

I can't imagine a “higher power.” In its simplicity, I see chance, unbearable, benevolent, burning . . .

And without which human beings would be *what they are*.

What must be *sensed* in the shadows before us: the enchanting call of a milky beyond, the certainty of a lake of delights.³⁰

VI

The interrogation that occurs through failure is the kind that demands an immediate response. I need to live, not to know. The interrogation that desires to know (torture) assumes that real concerns have been set aside: it takes place when life is suspended.

Now it is easy for me to see more or less what turns each of us away from the possible, or, if you will, turns each man from himself.

The possible is effectively only a chance—one that we cannot seize without danger. This to the extent that we accept a dull life and regard as dangerous the truth of life that is chance. Chance is a factor in rivalry, an impudence. Hence the hatred of the sublime, the affirmation of the earthly *ad unguem*³¹ and the fear of ridicule (rare feelings, that trip us up, that we fear having). A false, opaque, devious attitude, closed to the inconvenience and even to some manifestations of life, what have you, that generally distinguish virility (maturity, conversations in particular), is, if you look at it, panicked fear of *chance*, of risk, of human possibility; of everything in humanity that we claim to love, that we take to be the chance that befalls us and reject with a false, closed attitude, as I said, as chance risking itself, as disequilibrium, intoxication, madness.

That's how it is. Each human being is occupied by killing what is human within him. To live, to demand life, to make the sound of life resound, is to go against one's interests. To say to those around you: "Look at yourselves, you are glum, beaten down, your idleness, this desire for extinction, this infinite (accepted) boredom, this lack of pride, this is what you do with the possible; you read and you admire, but you kill within yourselves, around you, what you claim to love (you only love it when it has fallen down and died, no longer asks anything from you), you love the possible *in books* but *I read* the hatred of chance in your eyes . . ." To speak like this is stupid, it is to go in vain against the current, it is to repeat the groans of the prophets. The love that chance asks for—that wants to be loved—also asks that we love the inability to love what chance rejects.

I don't hate God in any way: I don't know anything about God. If God were what they say, He would be *chance*. To my mind, it's no less of a dirty trick to change chance into God than the opposite is for a believer. God can't be *chance* since He is *everything*. *But* the chance that occurs, that endlessly risks itself, has no knowledge of itself, and denies itself as it occurs—is war itself—asks to be loved no less and loves no less than the devout believe God does. What am I saying? Compared to its demands, those of a God are child's play. Chance effectively lifts us up to throw us down from on high; the only grace that we can hope for in the end is that chance destroy us tragically rather than leaving us to die of stupefaction.

When the falsely pious oppose the love of the Creator against that of His creations, they oppose chance to God, what occurs (risks itself) to the overpowering totality of the fallen world.

THE LOVE OF GOD'S CREATURES IS EVER THE SIGN AND THE PATH OF A LOVE THAT IS INFINITELY MORE TRUE, MORE LACERATING, MORE PURE THAN DIVINE LOVE (God: If one imagines the figure of God as it has developed, a simple support for merit, the substitution of a guarantee for randomness.)

To those who grasp what chance is, how the idea of God seems insipid, and equivocal, and crippled!

Being everything, God distributed the attributes of chance! The slippery aberration assumes the crushing—intellectual, moral—of the creature (the creature is human chance).³²

VII

I am writing sitting on a dock, feet on a ship's ballast.³³ I'm waiting. I hate waiting. Little hope of arriving on time. This tension opposed to the desire for life . . . what absurdity! I say of my glum evocation of happiness in the middle of a beaten-down crowd *that waits*—at twilight, for the end of the day.

Arrived on time.³⁴ Six kilometers on foot through the forest at night. Woke K. throwing handfuls of little pebbles against her window. Exhausted.

Paris is oppressive after the bombings. But not too oppressive. When we were leaving, S. repeated a comment from his building manager: "All the same, what these times show you: to think that they've found living corpses under the rubble!"

From an account of torture (*Petit Parisien* April 27): ". . . eyes gouged out, ears and fingernails ripped off, head bashed to pieces with blows from a log, tongue cut with tongs . . ." As a child, the idea of torture made life a burden to me. I don't know, even now, how I could bear it . . . The earth is in the sky and it turns . . . The earth today, everywhere, is covered with flowers—lilies, wisteria, iris—and, at the same time, war drones on: hundreds of airplanes fill the night with a sound like flies . . .

Sensuality is nothing without the equivocal slippage in which *the accessible*—something sticky, mad, that normally slips away—is suddenly perceived. This "stickiness" still gets away, but from the glimpse of it, our heart beats with demented hopes: these hopes themselves, jostling one another, pushing up against one another as if trying to escape, cause a surge, in the end . . . A senseless beyond often lacerates us while we seem lascivious.

"Beyond" beginning from the sensation of *nakedness*. Chaste *nudity* is the extreme limit of stupor. But with an embrace (of the body, hands, moist lips), it awakens us to what is gentle, animal, *sacred*.

Once naked, each of us is open to more than we are, damaged initially by the absence of animal limits. We damage ourselves; spreading our legs open, as far as possible, to what is no longer ourselves, but the impersonal, swampy existence of the flesh.

The communication of two beings, passing through the loss of themselves in the gentle mire that is shared between them . . .

An immense expanse of forest, wild-looking heights.³⁵

I lack imagination. Carnage, blazing fire, horror: that, it seems, is what can be expected in the weeks ahead. Walking in the forest or over the expanse of the heights, I can't imagine seeing it burn: nevertheless it will catch fire like straw.

Saw today, from very far away, smoke from a fire near A.

These last days waiting count among the best in my life. So many flowers all around! How beautiful the light is and how insanely high, in the sunlight, the foliage of the oak trees!

The sovereignty of desire, of anguish, is the most difficult idea to understand. Desire effectively dissimulates itself. And naturally anguish is silent (affirms nothing). From the perspective of common sovereignty, anguish and desire seem dangerous. But from the perspective of anguish or desire, what do they have to do with sovereignty?

Having no dominion, misunderstood by everyone, in front of the being and even hiding itself, with nothing that is not ridiculous and unavowable, what more can sovereignty signify?

I nevertheless describe the *autonomy* of moments of distress or joy (of ecstasy or physical pleasure) as the least questionable. Sexual pleasure (that hides itself and provokes laughter) touches the essence of *majesty*. Likewise despair.

But in despair, in pleasure, the being does not *know* majesty. And if they knew it, they'd lose it. Human *autonomy* necessarily conceals itself (it becomes servile if affirmed). True sovereignty puts itself to death so consciously that it can't, at any moment, pose the question of this self-destruction.

³⁶A woman must have more *virtue* to say, “No men around here, I'll go find one”³⁷ than to refuse temptation.

When drinking, people flow into one another naturally. Then parsimony is a vice, an exhibition of poverty (of desiccation). If not for the power people have of obscuring, of poisoning things from all sides—of being

rancid and bitter, dull and petty—what excuse would there be for feminine prudence? Work, anxieties, immense love . . . the best and the worst.

Sunny day, almost summer. The sun, the warmth suffice. Flowers, bodies open up . . .

Nietzsche's weakness: he is critical in the name of a *moving* value, whose origin and end he has—obviously—been unable to grasp.

To grasp an isolated possibility, having a particular end, that is only an end for itself, isn't this basically gambling?

So it might be that the interest of the operation is in the risk, not in the chosen end.

Narrowly missing the end? The risk marks out the values nonetheless.

The *overman* or Borgia sides of things are limited, vainly defined in relation to possibilities whose essence is a surpassing of the self.

(This owes nothing to a jostling rush, to a great wind, reversing the old certainties.)

This evening, physically at the end, feeling strange, aggravated. Always waiting . . . Undoubtedly not the moment for interrogation. But what can be done? Despite myself, fatigue and irritation put me in question and even, in the present suspension, question *everything* completely. I'm only afraid of being unable, in these conditions, to go to the end of the distant possibility. What does failure mean—if it is so easy to surpass? I'll fail in every way, attributing a fleeting result to my weakness.

I push on—and calm, in the end, returns, a feeling of control and of being a toy only if in harmony with the game.

To go to the end? Now I can only advance by chance. Just now, on the road, in a row of chestnut trees, flames of nonsense opened the limits of the sky . . . But I must respond to immediate questions. *What can I do?* How can I relate my ends to an activity that never waivers? And thereby lead a full being to the void?³⁸

The pure exaltation of the other day was followed by an immediate disquiet. Nothing unexpected. Shattered once again by waiting.

Just now looking around with K. We were, for a moment—so short—happy. The possibility of an infinite void haunts me; consciousness of an inexorable situation, of a future without escape (I'm no longer talking about the events at hand.)

Other more ponderous situations? Other times?
It's uncertain.

Today everything is laid bare.

Everything resting on artifice is lost.

The night we are entering isn't only the dark night of St. John of the Cross, or the empty universe, without a helpful God: it is the night of real hunger, of cold rooms, and of vacant eyes in police stations.

This coincidence of three different forms of despair is worth being considered. My concerns for the beyond of chance seem groundless confronted with the needs of the multitude. I know that there is no recourse and that the ghosts of desire increase the pain in the end.

How, in these conditions, to justify the world? Or better: how can I justify *myself*? How can there be a *desire to exist*?

An uncommon strength is necessary, but if I didn't already have that strength, I would not have grasped this situation in its nakedness.

What makes me go to the depths: My daily anguish.

Gentleness, or rather the delight of my life.

Constant alarms, related to my personal life, inevitable for me, that much greater than the delight.

The value taken on by delight at the moment when, on all sides, the impossible is there.

The fact that at the slightest weakness, everything fails me at the same time.

The enthusiasm with which I write reminds me of Goya's *Dos de Mayo*. I'm not joking. This painting has nothing to do with night: it is fulgurating. My present happiness is solid. I feel a strength tested by the worst. I laugh at anything and everything.

Otherwise I'd fall, without anything to catch me, into a definitive void.

The void tempts me but *what can I do* in the void?

Become a disaffected thing, an old gun. Sink into self-disgust.

Without my happiness—without fulgurating—I fall. I am chance, light, that which, gently, holds back the inevitable.

And if not?

The subject of infinite suffering, without meaning.

For that reason, I would suffer doubly if I lost K. She reaches not only my passion, but my nature (essence).

³⁹I woke up anguished by yesterday's torpor. All forgetfulness is depressing: mine signals fatigue. Fatigue from the abnormal conditions in

which I'm living? Fatigue close to despair? Enthusiasm itself touches on despair.

This anguish is superficial. Constancy is stronger. The fact of having spoken my resolution makes it tangible: it's the same this morning as yesterday. The passion is, in a certain sense, on the second level. Or rather, it turns into decisiveness. Absorbing life, passion degrades it. It risks *everything*, all of life, on partial stakes. Pure passion is comparable to a female orchestra without men: an element is missing and the void appears. The risk I'm imagining, on the other hand, is more complete: nothing in it would not be in question, the life of all beings and the future of the intelligible world. Even the void envisioned in loss would be, in this case, the expected response to the infinite desire, the occurrence of an infinite death, a void so great that it discourages to the point of despair.

What is in question today is not the disappearance of a strong (lucid, cynical) nature. But only the union of this nature and the totality of being: at the extreme limits of the intelligence and the experience of the possible.

⁴⁰In each area, it is necessary to consider:

1. An average, generally accessible, or for a determinate mass; thus the average level of life, the average output;
2. The extremity, the *record*, the summit.

Humanly, neither one of these opposed considerations nor the other can be eliminated. The point of view of the masses necessarily counts for the individual, just as that of the individual does for the mass.

If one of the viewpoints is denied, it is only provisionally, in defined conditions.

These considerations are clear in what relates to particular areas (physical exercise, intelligence, culture, technical abilities . . .). They are less clear in regard to life in general, of what can be expected from life, or if you will, of the way of life worth being loved (sought, praised). Without mentioning divergences of opinion, a final difficulty arises from the fact that the way of life envisioned differs *qualitatively*—and not only quantitatively—according to whether one envisions the average or the extreme. There are in fact two kinds of *extremes*: that which, from the outside, seems extreme to the average person; and that which seems extreme to those who have experience of extreme situations.⁴¹

Here again, no one can, *humanly*, suppress one or the other of these points of view.

But if the average person eliminating the point of view of the pure extreme is justifiable, it is not the same for extremity denying the existence or the right of an average point of view.

I will go further.

Extremity cannot be reached if one imagines that the masses *must* recognize it as such (Rimbaud thought the crowd was diminished by the fact that it didn't know about, misunderstood Rimbaud!).

But:

In the same way, there is no extremity without recognition—on the part of other people (if it is not the extremity *of others*: I am referring to the Hegelian principle of *Anerkennen*).⁴² The possibility of being recognized by a significant minority (Nietzsche) is itself already in the night, toward which, in the end, all extremity is directed.

In the end, only chance retains a disarming possibility.

VIII

⁴³An infinite *possibility* flows from the multitude of life's difficulties: we attribute the feeling of the impossible that dominates us to those difficulties that get in our way!

If existence is intolerable, we think, it's because some specific wrong has lead us astray.

And we struggle against this wrong.

The *impossible* is lifted if the struggle is *possible*.

If we claim the summit, we cannot offer it up as attained.

On the contrary, I feel the necessity of saying—tragically?—perhaps? . . . Nietzsche's powerlessness is without appeal.

If *possibility* is offered by chance—not received from the outside but that which *we are*, at risk, and *forcing us* to the very end, there is obviously nothing about which we could say: "It will be possible in this way." It will not be *possible*, but *risked*. And chance, risk, essentially assume the *impossible*.

Nietzsche's tragedy is that of the night, born of an excess of daylight.

Eyes emboldened, open like an eagle in flight . . . Blinded by the sun of immortality, the fulguration of malice.

It's a dazzled man who speaks.

⁴⁴The greatest difficulty.

Touching as far down as possible.

Where everything thrown to the ground is shattered. Your nose in the vomit.

Rising up again without shame: to the heights of friendship.

When the strength and tension of the will fail, chance laughs (which is to say—what do I know?—there is a precise feeling of possibility, a harmony preordained by chance) and innocently raises its finger . . .

This seems strange to me, ultimately.
I myself am going to the point of greatest darkness.
Where everything seems lost to me.
Against all appearances: upheld by a feeling of chance!
This would be an impotent comedy, if I were not worn out by anguish.

The greatest weight.
To admit Nietzsche's defeat, his blind error, his impotence.
A burnt bird in the light. The stench of cooked feathers.
⁴⁵The human head is weak and ready for battle.
It can't be avoided.

So. We expect love to be the solution to *infinite* suffering. What else can we do? Our anguish is infinite and we fall in love. Comically we must lay our beloved down on this Procrustean bed: *infinite* anguish!

The only strict, honest path. Make *no* finite demands. Admit no limits of any kind. Not even in relation to the infinite. Require people to be who they are or who they will be. *Know nothing*, other than fascination. Never stop at apparent limits.⁴⁶

IX

Yesterday evening, we drank two bottles of wine (K. and I).⁴⁷ Enchanted, stormy night with a full moon. The forest at night, along the road, moonlit clearings between the trees, and, on the embankment, little phosphorescent patches (by the light of a match, fragments of worm-eaten branches inhabited by glowworms). Never knew happiness more pure, wild, dark. Sensation of advancing very far: advancing into the impossible. An enchanted impossible. As if, in the night, we were lost.

Returning alone, climbing to the summit of the rocks.⁴⁸

The idea of the absence of necessity in the world of objects, of the adequacy of ecstasy to this world (and not of ecstasy to God or of objects to mathematical necessity) appeared to me for the first time—lifted me off the ground.

On top of the rocks, I took off my clothes in the violent wind. (It was hot: I only had a shirt and pants.) The wind tore through the clouds, deforming them before the moon. The immense forest in the lunar light. I turned toward . . . in hopefulness . . . (No interest in being naked: I put my clothes back on.) Beings (a lover, myself) lose themselves slowly in death, resembling clouds undone by the wind: *never more . . . I loved K.'s face*. Like the clouds undone by the wind: without crying out, I entered into an ecstasy reduced to a dead point, and that much more limpid.

An enchanted night similar to few nights that I have known.

The horrible night in Trento (the old men, handsome, dancing like gods—the storm unleashed, while I watched, from a room in which hell . . . —the window opened on the dome and the palaces along the square).⁴⁹

At night, the little public square at V., at the top of the hill, resembled *for me* the square in Trento.

Nights in V., equally entrancing as the agonizing one.

A decision confirmed by a poem about dice,⁵⁰ written at V., is related to Trento.

This night in the forest was no less decisive.

Chance—an incredible series of chances—has been my companion for ten years now. Lacerating my life, ruining it, leading it to the edge of the abyss. Certain types of chance skirt the edge: a little more anguish and chance would be its opposite.

X

Learned about the landing.⁵¹ The news didn't grip me. Insinuated slowly.

Went back to my room.
Hymn to life.

I would have wanted to laugh yesterday.
Toothache (that seems to be gone).
Again this morning, fatigue, mind a blank, lingering fever. Feeling of impotence. Afraid there might not be more news.⁵²

I'm calm, empty. Hope for important events balances me.
At a loss, however, in my solitude. Resigned. Indifferent about my personal life.

Ten days ago, on the contrary, returning from Paris I was surprised . . .⁵³
Egotistically, I've come to desire stability for some time! But no. Impossible today to think of respite—though probable.

The sound of bombs in the distance (becoming banal). Condemned to twelve days of solitude, without friends, without possible relaxation, obliged to rest, depressed, in my room: to let myself be worn down by anguish.

Making connections? Recovering my life? My shame about anguish is linked to the idea of chance. In fact, connecting with someone in *present conditions* would be the only authentic chance, the full "state of grace" that is chance.

For a man, loving a woman (or some other passion) is the only means of not being God. The priest adorned with arbitrary ornaments is not God either: something in him vomits logic, the *necessity* of God. An officer, a bellboy, etc. is subordinate to the arbitrary.

I suffer: happiness might be taken away tomorrow. Whatever would remain of my life seems empty (empty, really empty). Attempt to fill this void? With another woman? Nauseating. A human task? I would be God!

At least I would try to be. They say to those who have just lost what they love that they should work: submit to some given reality and live for it (for the interest that comes with it). But if this reality seems empty?

I've never felt so strongly—after so many excesses, I'm really coming to the end of the possible—that I must love what is essentially perishable and live at the mercy of its loss.

I have the feeling of profound moral demands.

Today I suffer harshly knowing that there is no way to be God without failing myself.⁵⁴

Another eleven days of solitude . . . (if nothing bad happens). Yesterday afternoon, began working on a development⁵⁵ that I interrupt—to emphasize its intention: the light of my life is missing and, desperately, I work, seeking the unity of man and the world! On coordinated levels of knowledge, political action and limitless contemplation!

I have to go back to this truth: that a life implicates a beyond of light, of beloved chance.

My madness—or rather my extreme wisdom—nevertheless reveals this to me: that this beyond chance had to be a support when my immediate chance—beloved being—left me, itself had the nature of chance.

Normally, we deny this nature. We can only deny it by seeking a ground, a stable foundation that permits the unexpected to endure, reduced to a secondary role. We seek this beyond principally when we suffer. Hence the foolishnesses of Christianity (wherein religious trinkets have been offered from the beginning). Hence the necessity of a reduction to reason, of an infinite confidence in systems that eliminate chance (pure reason is itself deducible to the need to eliminate chance—which theories of probability apparently do).

Extreme fatigue.

My life is no longer the surging up—without which nonsense is present.

Fundamental difficulty: a surge being necessary for chance, the light (chance) upon which the surge depends is lacking . . .

The irreducible element is found in the surge that does not wait for the light to appear but provokes it. The surge—itself random—defines the essence and the beginning of chance. Chance defines itself in relation to desire, which itself despairs or surges up.

Making use of fictions, I dramatize being: I lacerate its solitude and in the laceration, I communicate.

What's more, mischance is livable—for human beings—only when dramatized. Drama accentuates the element of chance in mischance that

persists in it or proceeds from it. The essence of the dramatic hero is the surge—the rising to chance (a dramatic situation demands elevation before the fall) . . .

Once more I stop the development of the thought that I have begun. Disordered method. Drinking—in the café du Taureau—too many aperitifs. An old man, my neighbor, wheezing gently like a fly. A family drinks beers around a young girl dressed for her first communion. German soldiers file quickly past in the street. A girl sitting between two workers (“You can both fool around with me.”). The old man continues to wheeze (he’s discrete). Sun, clouds. Women in clothes are like a gray day. The sun beneath the clouds.

Exasperation. Depressed, then excited.

Regaining calm. A little firmness suffices.

My method or rather my absence of method is my life.

Less and less do I question in order to know. I mock myself and I live, I question in order to live. I carry out my quest, living a relatively hard trial, equal to my agonizing nerves. At this point there is no escape. Alone with myself, previous means of escape (pleasure and excitement) fail me. I have to control myself, lacking another outlet.

Control myself? Easy!

But the man—master of himself—that I might become displeases me.

Slipping to hardness, I quickly return to friendship for myself, to gentleness: hence the necessity of endless chance.

At this point, I can only seek chance, attempt to grasp it *while laughing*.

Taking risks, seeking chance, requires patience, love, complete abandon.

My real period of imprisonment—still ten days to pass in this locked room—begins this morning (I went out yesterday and the day before yesterday).⁵⁶

Yesterday kids following me, running behind the streetcar, another behind a bus. What’s in the head of a child? The same things as in mine. The fundamental difference is decisiveness, which relies on me (I cannot rely on others myself). Here I am, *me*: awakening, emerging from the long human childhood in which, of all things, human beings ceaselessly relied on one another. But this dawn of knowledge, of the full possession of the self, is fundamentally only the night, impotence.

A short phrase—"Would there be freedom without impotence?"—is the excessive sign of chance.

An activity that has only things entirely measurable as its object is powerful, but servile. Freedom flows from the unexpected. If we adjusted the sum of energy produced to the sum necessary for production, human potency would leave nothing to desire in that it would be sufficient and represent the satisfaction of *needs*. On the other hand, this adjustment would be characterized by constraint: the attribution of energy to different sectors of production would be set once and for all. But if the sum produced is superior to what is necessary, an impotent activity has *limitless* production as its object.

This morning I was resigned to waiting.

Without warning, gently, I decided . . .

It was unreasonable, obviously. Nevertheless, I left, supported by a feeling of chance.

Chance, solicited, answered me. Well beyond my hopes.

The horizon clears up (remains dark).

The wait reduced from ten days to six.

The game changes: it might be that today I knew how to play.

Anguish haunts me and wears me out.⁵⁷

Anguish is there, suspended above profound possibilities . . . I hoist myself to my summit and I see: the open depths of things.

Like a knock at the door, odious, anguish is there.

A sign of risk, a sign of chance.

With an insane voice, it invites me.

I rise up and flames rise up in front of me!

That's how it goes:⁵⁸ my life, under present conditions? A nightmare, a moral torture.

It's negligible, obviously!

We ceaselessly "annihilate" ourselves; thought, life fall, dissipating themselves into a void.

To call this void God—toward which I directed myself! Toward which I directed my thought!

In the prison of the body, what can be done, if not evoke the expanse that begins beyond the walls?⁵⁹

My life is strange, exhausting, and, this evening, collapsed.
 Spent an hour waiting, assuming the worst.
 Then finally chance. But my situation remains inextricable.

At midnight, I open my window on a black street, a black sky: this street and this sky, these shadows are clear.

Beyond the darkness, I attain something pure, laughing, free—easily.

⁶⁰Life begins again.
 A familiar, friendly blow to the head.
 Stupefied, I drift downstream.

K. tells me that on the 3rd, having been drinking, she went looking for the key to the cistern, obstinately but in vain; she discovered herself, around four in the morning, sleeping in the woods, damp.

Couldn't take the alcohol today.

I would like (but everything incites me toward this) to give my life a decided direction—playful. Demanding from it a miraculous gentleness, the clarity of the atmosphere of a summit. Transfiguring things around me. Playful, I imagine a pact with K.: the joyfulness, the void itself (and without aim), transparent, at the height of the impossible.

To demand henceforth, to act, to assign chance: it responds to the rush of desire.

Action without narrow ends, unlimited, glimpsing chance beyond ends, as a surpassing of the will: the exercise of a *free* activity.

⁶¹Going back over the course of my life.
 I see myself slowly approaching a limit.

Anguish awaiting me on all sides: I walk a tightrope and stare at the sky; I perceive a minuscule star, shining with a light brightness; it consumes anguish—which awaits me on all sides.

I have a *charm*, an infinite power.

This morning I doubted my luck.
 For a long moment—interminable waiting—imagining everything lost (at this moment it was logical).

I followed this reasoning: "My life is a leap, an impulse whose strength is chance. If chance, on the level on which this life now risks itself, fails me, I sink. I am nothing if not this man assigning chance, giving myself the power to do so. Misfortune, bad luck, taking place, chance, which impelled

me, was only an illusion. I lived believing I had the power to charm chance: this was false." I groaned on to the end: "My lightness, my amused victory over anguish was false. I staked desire and the will to act—I didn't choose the game—on my luck: today bad luck answered. I despise ideas that abandon life, when the ideas in question give chance the highest value . . ."

At this moment, I was so sick: a particular despair added a little (comical) bitterness to my depression. I waited in the rain for an hour. Nothing is more depressing than waiting in the emptiness of an alley.

K. walking with me, talking with me, the feeling of misfortune persisting. K. was there: I was inept. Her coming was unlikely. It was hard to think: my chance lives . . .⁶²

In me, anguish contests the possible.

It opposes an obscure impossible to an obscure desire.

At this moment, the possibility of chance contests anguish in me.

Anguish says: "impossible." The impossible remains *at the mercy of chance*.

Chance is defined by desire; nevertheless not every response to desire is chance.

Anguish alone defines chance completely: chance is what anguish in me takes for the impossible.

Anguish is the contestation of chance.⁶³

But I grasp anguish at the mercy of chance, which contests it, and which alone contests the right of anguish to define us.

After this morning's lacerations, now my nerves are once again put to the test.

The interminable waiting and the gambling, joyful perhaps and leaning over the worst, exhausting my nerves, then an interruption shaking me further . . . I have to let out a long moan: this ode to life, to its glassy transparency!

I don't know if K., despite herself, is arranging this instability in some obscure way. The disorder she keeps me in apparently arises from her nature.

They say: "In place of God, there is the impossible—and not God." Add: "the impossible *at the mercy of chance*."⁶⁴

Why complain about K.?

Chance is contested endlessly, endlessly in stake.

Deciding to incarnate chance *ad unguem*,⁶⁵ K. couldn't have done better: appearing, but when anguish . . . disappearing so suddenly that

anguish . . . As if she could only follow the night, as if the night alone could follow her. But each time without thinking of it, as is appropriate if it's chance.

"In place of God, chance," is the occurrence of nature, but once and for all; surpassing itself in infinite exhalations, excluding possible limits. In this infinite representation, undoubtedly the most audacious and insane that man has ever attempted, the idea of God is enveloped by an exploding bomb: divine poverty, impotence opposed to human chance!

God: a remedy applied to anguish: but not to cure anguish.

Beyond anguish, chance, suspended by anguished, defined by it.

Without anguish—without extreme anguish—chance wouldn't even be perceived.

"God, if there were a God, could not, through simple appropriateness, reveal himself to the world other than in human form." (1885⁶⁶)

To be human: facing the impossible, the wall . . . that only chance . . .

K.: depressed this morning after a night of senseless anguish, of insomnia, agonizing, and, hearing a number of airplanes, gripped by soft trembling: frail, beneath apparent brilliance—joviality, full of energy. I am normally so anxious that this senseless distress escapes me. Sensing my misery and the difficulties, the quagmires into which I advanced, she laughed *good-naturedly*. Surprised to find her, suddenly, against appearances, as a friend, like a sister . . . If it had not been like that, however, we would be strangers to one another.

June–July 1944

The Times¹

How greedily this wave is approaching, as if it were trying to reach something! How it crawls with terrifying haste into the inmost crevices of the craggy gorge! It seems to be trying to arrive before someone else; something of value, of great value, seems to be hidden there. And now it is returning, a bit more slowly but still quite white with excitement—is it disappointed? Has it found what it was seeking? Is it simulating disappointment? But already another wave is nearing, still more greedily and wildly than the first; and its soul, too, seems full of secrets and the hunger of treasure digging. That is how the waves live—that is how we live, we who will—I will say no more.

So? You mistrust me? You are angry with me, you beautiful monsters? Are you afraid I will divulge your entire secret? Well, be angry with me; raise your dangerous green bodies as high as you can; make a wall between me and the sun—as you are now! Truly, even now nothing remains of the world but green dusk and green thunderbolts. Carry on as you like, roaring with overweening pleasure and malice—or dive again, pouring your emeralds down into the deepest depths, and throw your infinite white mane of foam and spray over them: Everything suits me for everything suits you so well, and I am so well-disposed toward you for everything: how could I think of betraying you? For—mark my word!—I know you and your secret; I know your kind! You and I—are we not of one kind?—You and I—do we not have one secret!

The Gay Science § 310

I

At the café, yesterday after dinner, young women and men dancing to the sound of an accordion.

The accordionist had the head—small, attractive—of a duck:² belting out the song with extreme joyfulness, awkwardness, animal expansiveness.

He pleased me: I would have liked to be stupid myself, to have a bird's eye. The dream: relieving my head while writing, the way one relieves one's bowels . . . becoming empty, like a musician. Is that all? No! Surrounded by women—young, lively, pretty—my burden (my heart) is *infinite*, like the musician's lightness! I buy a round of drinks for the group, and the owner announces: "from an admirer!"

One of my friends—weak natured, like I like, weakness guaranteeing a firmness in rejecting a comical order of things—found himself in Dunkirk in May 1940. The job they gave him for a few days was to empty the pockets of the dead men (a task undertaken so as to reach their families). His turn came to board: the boat finally departed, my friend landed on the English coast; at Folkestone, a short distance from Dunkirk; tennis players in white moving about on the courts.

Similarly, June 6, the day of the embarkation, I saw, in the center of town, fairground workers putting up a merry-go-round.

A little later, in the same place, the clear sky was filled with a convoy of small American airplanes. Stripped black and white, sweeping across the rooftops.. Machine-gunning the roads and the railroads. I was thrilled. It was delightful.

Very randomly (written by chance and like gambling):

That the times should be the same thing as being, being the same thing as chance . . . as the times.

Means that:

If there is time-being, time encloses being in the occurrence of chance, *individually*. The possibilities are distributed and oppose one another.

With *individuals*, which is to say, without the distribution of possibilities, time couldn't exist.

Time is the same thing as desire.

The object of desire is that time not exist.

Time is the desire that time not exist.

The object of desire: the suppression of individuals (*others*); for each individual, each subject of desire, this means a reduction of others to oneself (to be everything).

Wanting to be everything—or God—is wanting to suppress time, to suppress chance (the unexpected).

Not wanting to be everything is wanting time, wanting chance.

Wanting chance is *amor fati*.³

Amor fati signifies wanting chance, differing from what was.

To attain the unknown and to risk it.

To gamble, for the *individual*, is to risk winning or losing. For the group, gambling is surpassing the given, to go beyond.

In a definitive way, to gamble is to bring what did not exist into being (in this, time is history).⁴

In the union of bodies—in the case of exceeding pleasure—to retain a suspended moment of exaltation, of intimate surprise and *excessive purity*. The being, at this moment, raises itself above itself, like a hunted bird might raise itself up; throw itself into the depths of the sky. But at the same time that it annihilates itself, it enjoys its annihilation, and dominates all things from this height, with a feeling of strangeness. The exceeding pleasure cancels itself out and cedes its place to this annihilating elevation at the heart of the full light. Or rather, pleasure, ceasing to be a response to the desire of the being, surpassing this desire excessively, at the same time surpasses the being and substitutes a slippage in its place—a way of being suspended, radiant, excessive, linked to the feeling of being naked and of penetrating the open nakedness of the other. Such a state assumes the height of nakedness, the absolute summit, this through naive touching—at the same time skillful: the skill envisioned is neither that of the hands nor that of the body. It requires an intimate understanding of nakedness—of the wound of physical beings—the opening deepened with every touch.

Unexpected image of K. as a trapeze artist in a music hall. This kind of image pleases her with its logical equilibrium, and agreeing with her, we laugh: *I see her* under the bright lights, wearing golden spangles, *suspended*.⁵

A young cyclist in the forest dressed in a gray wool cape: singing a few steps away from me. His voice is serious and, in his exuberance, he nods his round curly head; I noticed his full lips as he passed. The sky is gray, the forest seems harsh; things are cold today. A long, relentless noise of bombers takes the place of the young man's song, but the sun, a little farther off, crosses the road (I'm writing standing on a hillside). The muffled noise is stronger than ever: followed by the crash of bombs and anti-aircraft fire. Only a few kilometers away it seems. Barely two minutes and it's all over: emptiness again and more gray, more ambiguous than ever.

My weakness worries me.

At any moment, anguish enters, it strangles me and in its vice grip, I suffocate and attempt to flee. Impossible. I can't in any way admit what is, that to which I must submit, that nails me down.

My anguish is doubled by another, and we are two, hunted by a nonexistent hunter.

Nonexistent?

Ponderous neurotic figures badger us.

Suggesting others, equally ponderous, but true.

Reading a book on Descartes, I have to reread the same paragraph three or four times.⁶ I can't concentrate: my heart races, my temples throb. Right now I'm lying down like a wounded man, felled provisionally by a bad fate. My gentleness in regard to myself calms me: in the depths of anguish in which I am, one finds spite, intimate hatred.

Remaining alone, the idea of loving K. out of self-hatred scares me. Burning passion keeps my lips open, my mouth dry, my cheeks warm, undoubtedly linked to my horror of myself. I don't like myself and I love K. This evening this passion that kindles inhuman difficulties reached a fever pitch. I must escape myself at any cost, put life in an unlimited (for myself) image. But anguish linked to the uncertainty of feelings paralyzes K.⁷

To combat anguish, neurosis! (Just now, a siren split the air. I listen: a tremendous noise of airplanes becomes for me the sign of a *morbid* fear.) Nothing grips me more: six years ago, neurosis, dogging me, *killed*. Desperately I struggled, I felt no anguish; I believed life was stronger. Initially life carried on, but neurosis made a comeback and *death* entered my house.

I hate oppression, constraint. If, as it does today, constraint touches those whose only meaning is freedom—at her side, I aspire to the light air of the summits—my hatred of constraint is the greatest imaginable.

Constraint is the limit of the past opposed to what still lives.

Neurosis is past hatred against the present: letting the dead speak for us.⁸

From the folds of misfortune that we bear within us, easy laughter requiring angelic courage is born.

“What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is a *going across* and a *going down*.

“I love those who do not know how to live except their lives be a going under, for they are those who are going beyond.

“I love the great despisers, for they are the great venerators and arrows for the other bank.”⁹

If read, these sentences from Zarathustra (prologue to the first part) have hardly any meaning. They evoke a possibility and ask to be lived *to the end*. By those who would risk measurelessly, only accepting the leap *by which they would surpass their limits*.

What stops me in neurosis is that it forces us to surpass ourselves. On pain of going down. Hence the *humanity* of neurosis, which transfigures myths, poems, or plays. Neurosis makes us a hero, a saint, if not invalids. In heroism or sanctity, the element of neurosis shapes the past, intervening as a limit (a constraint) within which life makes itself “impossible.” Those weighed down by the past, those whom a morbid attachment forbids the easy passage of the present, can no longer reach the present by the well-worn path. This is how they escape the past; while others, who barely hold onto it, nevertheless let it guide them, limit them. There is only one way out of neurosis: *it must be risked*. Life stops in it. It cannot follow a course set in its traces. It opens a new path; it creates for itself and others a new world.

Birth does not happen in a day. Many paths are shining dead ends, having only the appearance of chance. They escape the past in that they evoke a beyond: the evoked beyond remains inaccessible.

Vagueness is the rule in this area: we don’t know if we reach it (“man is a bridge, not a goal”¹⁰). *Maybe* the overman is a goal. But if the overman

is a goal, it is only as an evocation: if real, he would have to risk himself, desire the beyond of himself.

Can't I offer anguish a way out: risk, make a hero of chance? Or rather of freedom? Chance is the form of time in us (of the hatred of the past). Time is freedom. Despite the constraints that fear opposes to it. To be a bridge but never a goal: this requires a life torn from norms with an unbending, tightly gripped, volitional power, no longer accepting in the end to be turned away from a dream.

Time is chance that demands the individual, the separated being.
For and in the individual a form is *new*.

Time without risk would be as if it did not exist. Time wants uniformity dissolved: short of that it would be as if time did not exist. Similarly without time, uniformity dissolved would be as if it did not exist.

Necessarily, for the individual, variability is divided indifferently into fortunate and unfortunate. Indifference is like not being. Bad luck and good luck are arranged endlessly in variations on good luck and bad luck, the variability being essentially good luck (even in light of bad luck) and the triumph of bad luck uniformity (even as the uniformity of good luck). Uniform good luck and mobile bad luck indicate the possibilities of a tableau in which mobility-bad luck has the appeal of a tragedy (good luck on the condition of a split between the spectator and the spectacle—spectator enjoying the collapse: Would the death of the hero have any meaning without the spectator?).

(I am writing on a bar. I drank—five *pastis*—during an air raid: tiny, numerous swarms of airplanes haunted the sky: one violent anti-aircraft gun opened fire. A pretty girl, a handsome man were dancing, the girl half-naked under her sundress.)

II

After yesterday's bombings, communications with Paris seem cut off. Is this—from the fact of unfortunate coincidences—suddenly bad luck following extreme good luck?

For the moment it's only a threat.

Now, misfortune reaches me *from all directions*.

I have no recourse. I slowly let go of the possibilities that we normally hold onto.

If there was still time, but no . . .

What sadness at the end of the afternoon, on the road. It was pouring rain. For a moment we found shelter under a beech tree, sitting on a hill, feet on the trunk of a fallen tree. Under the low sky, the thunder rolling as if it would never end.

In each thing and one after another, I run up against the void. My will was often strained, I let it go: the way one opens the windows of one's house to ruin, wind, rain. Anguish sifted through the remains of my obstinacy, my life. The emptiness and nonsense of everything: the possibilities of suffering, of laughter and infinite ecstasies, the things as they are that bind us, food, drink, the flesh, beyond the emptiness, the nonsense. And nothing that I can do (undertake) or say. If not drivel on, ensuring that this is how things are.

This state of disarming hilarity (to which contestation has reduced me) remains itself at the mercy of new contestations.

Fatigue withdraws us from the game but not from contestation, which contests to the end the value of the state to which it has reduced us. This final movement could in the end be lost cruelty. But it might proceed from chance. Chance, if it occurs, contests contestation.

Between *contestation*, *questioning*, *risking* values, I cannot see a difference. Doubt successively destroys the values whose essence is to be

immutable (God, the good). But to risk assumes the value of risk. At the moment of risking, the value is only displaced from the object through being risked, through the contestation itself.

Questioning substitutes the mobile value of risk for immutable values. Nothing in risk is opposed to chance. Contestation says: "That which is only chance cannot be value, not being immutable," illegitimately making use of a principle linked to that which it contests. What is called chance is a value for a given situation, variable in itself. A particular chance is a response to desire. Desire is given in advance, at least as possible desire, even if it was not initially manifest.

Moreover, I'm unreasonable.

Intermittently, ridiculously nervous (subjected to an interminable test, my nerves give way from time to time: and if they give way, they really give way).

My misfortune is to exist—or more precisely to have existed—to possess so perfect a chance that I couldn't have been blessed with a better one: that much more true than it is fragile, at each moment again at risk. Nothing can be more cutting, lacerating, torturous through an excess of joy, in the end fully realizing the essence of the happiness that is to be ungraspable.

But desire is present, the anguish that wants to understand.

The moment is coming when, with the help of bad luck, I will abandon myself to a brief release.

Everything seems to be arranged: tired of waiting, I come to desire death: death seems preferable to the state of suspension; I no longer have the courage to live and, in my desire for rest, I no longer concern myself with knowing if death is the price I must pay.

The happiness that I await, I well know, is not ensured chance: it is naked chance—remaining free—proudly confined in its infinite randomness. How can we not grind our teeth at the idea of a horror prolonging itself *perhaps* in unspeakable joy, but with no other outlet than death?

What keeps me in anguish is undoubtedly that misfortune will reach me, without delay, in any case. I imagine arriving, slowly, surely, at the summit of laceration.

I cannot deny having gone, by myself, before this impossibility (often, an obscure attraction drives us). What I hated was not the laceration, it was loving nothing, no longer desiring risk. I had the temptation, sometimes,

of hating the moment of extreme misfortune: I might cease to bear life, I don't regret having had it.

I love this phrase from an explorer—written while dying on the ice: “I don’t regret this journey.”

Chance lost, the idea of reconquering—by force of skill, of patience—would be a failure in my eyes—a sin against chance. Rather die . . .

The return of chance can’t come from an effort, still less from merit. Possibly, if anguish has a good hand, with the happy nonchalance of a gambler (I imagine a gambler laughing at the edge of suicide, using himself up limitlessly).

If chance returns, it’s often at the moment when I’m laughing at it. Chance is the god that we blaspheme by not having the strength to laugh at it.

Everything seemed resolved.

Then came a wave of airplanes, sirens . . .

It’s undoubtedly nothing, but, once again, everything is at stake.

I sat down to write and the all-clear sounded . . . ¹¹

III

A certain emperor constantly thought of the instability of all things, so as not to attach too much importance to it and to remain calm. For me instability has a completely different effect; everything appears infinitely more precious, from the fact that everything is fleeting. It seems to me that the more precious vices, the most exquisite balms have always been thrown into the sea.

1881–1882¹²

Suddenly, the sky is clear . . .
It was covered at once with black clouds.

Few books have pleased me more than *The Sun Also Rises*.¹³
A certain resemblance between K. and Brett irritates me at the same time that it pleases me.

Rereading some pages from the *fiesta*, I was moved to tears.
However, the hatred of intellectual forms in the book leaves something missing. I prefer to *vomit*; I don't like the abstinence of a diet.

This morning the sky is harsh.
My eyes empty it; or rather lacerate it.
We understand each other, the old cloud and me, we measure one another, and we penetrate each other, to the interior of our bones.
We interpenetrate in this way—far and too far—we spirit each other away, annihilate each other. Nothing remains that is not empty—nothingness like the whites of the eyes.

In the moment as I am writing a pretty, poor young girl passes—healthy, frail. I imagine her naked, penetrating her—*further than herself*.

This joy that I imagine—and without anything to *desire*—is charged with a truth that empties out the possible, exceeding the limits of love. At the precise point when full and complete sensuality—and complete nakedness wanting itself as such—slips to the beyond of every conceivable space.

The necessity of a moral strength surpassing (erotic) pleasure. Not stopping there.

The most distant possibilities in no way cancel the closest. One can't be confused with the other.

A slippage in the play of bodies, to a beyond of beings, asks that these beings sink *slowly*, committing themselves, losing themselves in the excess without ever ceasing to go further: slowly in the final degree, finally reaching the beyond of the possible. This demands the complete exhaustion of the being—excluding anguish (hate)—an extended power, an enduring mastery, exercised even in the moment of sinking—without mercy, in a void whose limits slip away. This requires of human beings a firm, wise will, like a block, to deny and reverse—slowly—not only in the other but also in the self—difficulties, resistances encountered by stripping bare. This requires an exact knowledge of the way in which the gods want to be loved: *the knife of horror in hand*. How hard it is to take a step *in this senseless direction!* The anger, the brutality necessary, at every moment, surpass the goal. Every moment of this very distant odyssey, one after another, appears displaced: if it appears tragic, at once the feeling of farce makes itself felt—touching precisely the limit of the being; if it seems comical, the tragic essence escapes, the being is like a stranger to the pleasure he feels (pleasure is in a sense the outside—it is stolen, it gets away). The conjunction of an exceeding love and a desire for loss—the *duration of the loss* in fact—WHICH IS TO SAY TIME, WHICH IS TO SAY CHANCE—obviously represents the rarest of possibilities. The individual is the way time falls due. But if the individual has no luck (if the individual falls due poorly), the individual is no more than a barrier opposed to time—no more than anguish—or the cancellation through which he empties himself of anguish. If the individual annuls anguish, it's over: he conceals all expiration, confines himself to perspectives outside of time. If anguish endures, on the contrary, the individual must in a sense *rediscover* time. Time, the agreement with time. Chance for the individual is “communication,” the loss of one individual in another. “Communication” is the “duration of loss.” Will I in the end find a joyful, rather mad way of speaking—and the analytic subtlety—to recount the *dance around time* (*Zarathustra, In Search of Lost Time*)?

With the spite and obstinacy of a fly, I say insistently: *there is no wall between eroticism and mysticism!*

It's ultimately comical; they use the same words, traffic in the same images, and ignore it!

In the horror that she has of the stains of the body, grimacing with hatred, the mystic hypostatizes the fear that contracts her: she calls the positive object engendered by and perceived in this movement God. As is fitting, all the weight of this operation rests on disgust. Located at a point of interference, on one side there is the abyss (filth, the terrible perceived in the abyss with unnamable depths—time . . .) and on the other side, massive negation, closed off (like a paving stone, chastely, tragically closed off), from the abyss. *God!* We aren't finished with throwing human thought into this cry, this sickly appeal . . .¹⁴

"If you were a mystic monk!

"You would see God!"

An immutable being, which the movement about which I have spoken describes as definitive, a being that never was, never will be at risk.

I laugh at the kneeling unfortunates.

They never stop saying, naively:

"Don't believe us! Look at us! We avoid consequences. We say God, but no! It's a person, a particular being. We speak to Him. We address Him by name: it's the God of Abraham, of Jacob. We put Him on the same footing as another, a *personal being* . . ."

"A whore?"

" "

Human naiveté—the obtuse depths of the intelligence—permits all kind of tragic mistakes, conspicuous trickeries. Like sewing a bull-dick on a bloodless saint, one doesn't hesitate to *risk it* . . . the immutable absolute! God lacerating the night of the universe with a scream (Jesus's *Eli Eli lama sabachtani*): is that not a summit of spite? God himself crying out, addressing God: "Why have you abandoned me?" Which is to say: "Why have I abandoned myself?" Or more precisely: "What is happening? Could I have forgotten myself to the point of *putting myself at risk?*"

In the night of the crucifixion, God, like bloody meat and like a woman's soiled spot, is the abyss whose negation he is.

This is not blasphemy. On the contrary, I've brought myself to the edge of tears—and I'm laughing . . . mixing myself with the crowd . . . evoking

a laceration of time in the depths of the immutable! Since the necessity for the immutable . . . ? Is to change!

Strange that in the mind of the crowd, God is immediately disentangled from the absolute and the immutable.

Isn't this the height of comedy? To the point of senseless depths?

Jehovah disentangling himself: nailing himself to the cross! . . .

Allah disentangling himself through the game of bloody conquests . . .

Of such divine self-risk, the first equals comical infinity.

Proust responded—involuntarily it seems to me—to the idea of uniting Dionysus and Apollo. The Bacchic element is that much more divinely—cynically—laid bare in his oeuvre than it participates in Apollonian gentleness.

And the minor modality, expressly intended, is it not the mark of a divine discretion?

Between the sublime Christian comedy and our joyous dramas, Blake left some chance lines.

“And what's more, we want to be the inheritors of Christian meditation and penetration . . .” (1885–1886)¹⁵

“. . . Surpassing all Christianity by means of a *hyper-Christianity* and not to be contented with undoing it . . .” (1885)¹⁶

“We are no longer Christians, we have surpassed Christianity, because we have lived not too far from it, but too close, and certainly because it is from Christianity that we have come; our piety, more harsh and more delicate at once, forbids us today from still being Christians.” (1885–1886)^{17, 18}

IV

When we use the word “happiness” as defined by our philosophy, we’re not in the first place thinking like tired, anxious, and suffering philosophers, inwardly and outwardly at peace, in the absence of pain, impossibility, tranquility, the “holy of holies,” at equilibrium, something that more or less has the value of a deep dreamless sleep. Our world is rather uncertain, changing, variable, equivocal, a dangerous world perhaps, certainly more dangerous than simple, immutable, predictable, fixed, everything that the previous philosophers, heirs of the needs and fears of the herd, honored above all.

1885–1886¹⁹

The world gives birth and, like a woman, it isn’t pretty.

Every throw of the dice isolates one from the others. Nothing gathers them as a *totality*. The totality is necessity. The dice are free.

Time lets “what is” fall on individuals.

The individual himself—in time—loses himself, falls in a movement in which he dissolves—is “communication,” not inevitably from one to another.

With this exception, that *chance* is the duration of the individual in his loss, time, which needs the individual, is *essentially* the death of the individual (chance is an interference—or a series of interferences—between death and the being).

However I approach it, I hold onto a feeling of dispersion—of humiliating disorder.²⁰ I write a book: I have to put my ideas in order. I am diminished in my own eyes, sinking into the details of my task. In discursive form, thought is always attention to one point at the expense of other points, it tears a man away from himself, reduces him to a link in the chain that he is.²¹

The fate of the “whole man”—the man of *impalement*: not to have his intellectual resources fully available to him. The fate of working poorly, in disorder.

He lives under a threat: the *function* that he employs tends to supplant him! It can’t be employed to excess. The danger can only be escaped by forgetting about it. Working poorly, in disorder, is the only means, often, of *not becoming a function*.

But the inverse danger is equally great (vagueness, imprecision, mysticism).

Imagine ebb and flow.

Admit a deficit.

“We don’t have the right to desire a single state, we must desire to become *periodic beings*—like existence.” (1882–1885)²²

In the sun this morning, I had the magical feeling of happiness. No more thickness in me, not even a concern for jubilation. Infinitely simple life, at the limit of the stones, of the moss, of the sunny air.

I thought that the hours of anguish (of unhappiness) prepared the way to contrary moments—of the consummation of anguish, lightly illuminated! It’s true. But chance, happiness, this morning, in my feeling of knowing and loving what’s alive in the streets, men, children, women, were situated much closer to the last leap.

Chance, happiness, which don’t exalt me, arriving *unexpectedly*, in calm, I saw them radiating, gently, from their simple exuberance. The idea of a cry of joy shocked me. And I said of laughter; “*I am laughter*—to the extremity of the outburst—so much that it is superfluous to laugh and out of place.”

In the wood, the sun rising, I was free, my life rising effortlessly and, like a bird flying through the air: but infinitely free, dissolved and free.

How happy it is to pierce the thickness of things, to perceive their essence, the immense, infinite farce that endless chance makes of . . . (here,

that which lacerates the heart). Essence? *For me*. Which is the calm figure—reassuring on this condition: *that I should be disquiet and death itself*—an anguish so pure that anguish is lifted and death so perfect that compared to it, death is child's play? Could this be *me*?

Enigmatic, causing the impossible to fulgurate without a sound, demanding a majestic outburst from me—majesty shaken that much more by mad laughter if I am dying.

And death is not mine alone. We all die *incessantly*. The brief time that separates us from the void has the inconsistency of a dream. The dead that we imagine to be far off, we might with a leap throw ourselves less among them than beyond them: this woman, whom I embrace, is dying, and the infinite loss of beings, incessantly flowing, slipping outside of themselves, is ME!

V

For the moment, fish out of water, feeling of uneasiness and oppression. Time stops in its tracks: I examine the mechanism: the only way out is the impossible . . .

I remain in the expectation of a festival—that would be its resolution.

These words just now in *The Gay Science* tore me apart: ". . . always ready for the extreme as for a feast . . ."²³ Exhausted, I read about the *festivals* of previous days . . . (What can I say of the weakness and the derailments of the days that followed?)

Yesterday, the river flowed gray beneath a sky of heavy winds, dark clouds, thick mists: all the magic of the world suspended in the brief freshness of the evening, at the ungraspable moment in which the decidedly violent downpour, the forests, the meadows had the same trembling anguish as a woman about to give in. How at that moment—at the limit of the laceration of reason—happiness grows in me from my obvious inability to possess it. We were like the meadow about to be inundated with rain, disarmed under a wan sky. Having only one recourse: to carry our glasses to our lips and to drink gently from this immense gentleness, inscribed in the derangement of things.

No one ever lived this life in time to any other resolution than the *festival*. A never-ending peaceful happiness? Only a joyous outburst has the strength to deliver us. Eternal? Its only purpose is to spare us, to spare the dust particles that we are—a stroke of degradation—and of anguish—from proceeding from this outburst to death! . . .

Everyone living today should hear and take away this revelation:

Moralities, religions of compromise, hypertrophies of the intelligence, are born of the depression that follows the festival. It's necessary to live on the margin, to settle, to overcome anguish (this feeling of sin, of bitterness, of ashes, left in the wake of the festival).

I'm writing a day after the festival . . .

A thick little plant reminded me suddenly of a farm in Catalonia, lost in a distant valley, where I arrived by chance after a long walk in a forest. Under the bright afternoon sun, silently, lifeless: a dilapidated, monumental door, its pillars topped by aloe plants in vases. The magical mystery of life suspended in the memory of these buildings, raised in solitude for childhood, love, work, festivals, old age, discord, death . . .

I evoke this—truer—figure of myself: a man imposing a peaceful silence on others—through an excess of sovereign humor. As solid as the ground and as a moving cloud. Rising over his own anguish, in lightness, in the inhumanity of laughter.

The figure of humanity has grown through audacious moves; by no means does it depend upon me that human pride through time is not at stake in my consciousness.²⁴

Like a storm over a depression, a calm will rises up over a void. The will assumes the vertiginous abyss of time—the infinite opening of time over nothingness. The will has a clear consciousness of this abyss: it assesses it in a movement of horror and attraction (the attraction that much greater than the horror is great). The will is opposed to this attraction—cuts across its possibility: it even defines itself on this point as a stated prohibition. But at the same time it draws from its depths a feeling of tragic serenity. Action flowing from the will cancels the nothingness of time, it grasps things no longer in an immutable position, but in the movement that changes them through time. Action cancels and neutralizes life, but this movement of majesty that says, “I will” and orders action is situated at the summit where ruins (the nothingness that is created) are no less visible than the goal (the object changed through the action). The will contemplates by deciding on the action—contemplates itself in two aspects at the same time: the first, nothingness, which destroys, and the second, creation.

The will that contemplates (lifting up the individual who wills: who establishes himself as a figure of majesty, serious, even stormy, brows furrowed) is, in relation to the ordered action, transcendent. Reciprocally, the transcendence of God participates in the movement of the will. In general, transcendence—whether it opposes man to action (as the agent to his object) or God to man—is imperative by election.

As strange as this may be, *pain is so rare* that we have recourse to art *so as not to miss it in the end*. We couldn't bear it if it struck us, if it took

us completely by surprise, not being familiar with it. And we must certainly have knowledge of the nothingness that is revealed in it. The most common processes in life require that we lean out over the abyss. Not encountering the abyss in the suffering that comes to us, we have artificial abysses, that we provide for ourselves by reading, through shows, or, if we are talented, that we create. Initially, Nietzsche was, like others, someone who provoked nothingness—writing *The Birth of Tragedy* (but the nothingness of suffering came to him in such a way that he no longer had to seek it). That privileged state—which Proust, a little later, shared—is the only one where we can *if we accept it* completely dispense with the transcendence of the outside. It's true, it's not enough to say: *if we accept it*. We must go further, *if we love it*, if we have the strength to love it. Nietzsche's straightforwardness with the worst, his ease and joviality, follow from the passive presence of the abyss within him. Hence the absence of heavy and tensed raptures, which sometimes give mystics movements of terror—terrifying *as a consequence*.

At least the idea of the *eternal return* added . . .

From a voluntary movement (so it seems), it adds the amplification of eternal time to passive terrors.

But is this strange idea not simply the price of acceptance? Or rather of love? The price, the proof, and without measure? Hence the state of trance at the moment in which the idea was born, that Nietzsche described in his letters?

When it first appears, the idea of the *return* is ineffective. It does not by itself give a feeling of horror. It could amplify one if it exists, but if it doesn't . . . It cannot provoke more ecstasy. Before attaining mystic states, we must in some way open ourselves to the abyss of nothingness. This is what the great speakers of every faith incite us to do on our own. We must, ourselves, make an *effort*, while for Nietzsche, sickness and way of life that it entails did the initial work. For him, the infinite repercussion of the *return* had a meaning: that of the infinite acceptance of the fact of horror and more than the infinite acceptance, acceptance preceded by no *effort*.²⁵

Absence of effort!

Nietzsche's raptures described . . . the laughing lightening, movements of mad freedom, these comedic moods inherent in the “most elevated” states . . . Could this impious immanence be a present from suffering?

How beautiful—*through its lightness!*—is this denial of transcendence, of its frightening commandments!

The same absence of *effort*—preceded by the same pain, that undermines and isolates—can be found in Proust's life—both of them essential to the states that he attained.

In Zen, *satori* is intended only through comic subtleties.²⁶ It is the pure immanence of a return to the self. In place of transcendence, ecstasy—in the most insane, the emptiest abyss—reveals an equality of the real with itself, of the absurd object with the absurd subject, of the time-object, which destroys by destroying itself, with the subject destroyed. This *equal* reality is situated in a sense further away than transcendence; it is, it seems to me, *the most distant possibility*.

But I don't think that one can ever attain *satori* without first being shattered by suffering.

It can only be attained without effort: the slightest thing provokes it from the outside, when it is not expected.

The same passivity, absence of effort—and the erosion of pain—belongs to the *theopathic state*—in which divine transcendence is dissolved. In the *theopathic state*, the believer is himself God, the rapture in which he experiences this equality of himself and God is a simple state and “without effect,” however, like *satori*, situated *further away* than every conceivable rapture.

I described (*Inner Experience*²⁷) the experience (ecstatic) of the sense of nonsense, reversing itself into a nonsense of sense, then again . . . without admissible outlet . . .

If one examines the Zen methods, one will see that they imply this movement. *Satori* is sought in the direction of *concrete* non-sense, substituted for the tangible reality, revealing a deeper reality. This is the method of laughter . . .

The subtlety of a movement from “sense to nonsense” is graspable in the suspended state that Proust depicted.

The lack of intensity, the absence of fulgurating elements, answers to *theopathic* simplicity.

I wasn't at all aware of the *theopathic* nature of the mystic states known to Proust when, in 1942, I attempted to elucidate their essence (*Inner Experience*²⁸). At that moment, I myself had only attained states of laceration. I only slipped into *theopathy* recently: at once I thought of the simplicity of this new state known to Zen, Proust, and, in the final phase, Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross.

In the state of immanence—or *theopathy*—the fall into nothingness is not necessary. The mind itself is entirely penetrated by nothingness, is equal to nothingness (the sense is equal to the nonsense). The object meanwhile is dissolved in its equivalence with the mind. Time absorbs everything. Transcendence no longer grows at the expense of, over and above, nothingness, abhorring it.

In the first part of this diary, I tried to describe this state, which conceals itself as much as possible from aesthetic description.

The simple moments seem to me to relate Nietzsche's "states" to immanence. And it's true, these states participate in excess. However, the simple, jovial, easy moments are not separated from them.*

*See appendix two, "Nietzsche's Mystical Experiences."

VI

The time has come to complete my book. In a sense, it's an easy task! I have the feeling of having avoided, slowly surpassed innumerable dangers. I was not armed with principles that I could hold onto—but by force of tricks and shrewdness . . . by audaciously throwing the dice, I have advanced each day, each day I've made use of the obstacles. The principles of negation stated at the beginning are only internally consistent; they are at the mercy of play. Far from opposing my advances, they have served me better than the contrary principles would have, principles that I could *deduce* today. Using the subtle resources provided by passion, life, and desire against them, I have more surely carried the day than by relying on affirmative wisdom.

The lacerating question of this book . . .
posed by a helpless, wounded man, slowly losing his strength . . .
nevertheless going to the limit, silently sensing the possible; effortlessly;
despite the amassed obstacles, slipping through the fault in the walls . . .
if there is no great machine in the name of which to speak, how is action set, how can action be required and what is to be done?

Every action including our own has rested on transcendence: hence when we talk about action, we always hear the sound of chains, dragged by the ghosts of nothingness before everyone present.²⁹

I want only chance . . .
It is my goal, my only goal, and my only means.

How painful it is to speak at certain times. I *love* and it is my torture not to be figured out, to have to pronounce words—still sticky with lies, with the dregs of the times. It nauseates me to add (fearing rough misunderstandings): “I mock myself.”

So little am I addressing hostile readers that I require others to *figure me out*. Friendly eyes alone suffice for seeing far enough. Only friendship

urges the discomfort caused by the statement of a firm truth or a goal. If I ask a man who works as a porter to carry my bag at the station, I provide the needed information without discomfort. If I evoke the most distant possibility, touching, like a secret love, fragile intimacy, the words I write nauseate me and seem empty. I am not writing to preach. *It would seem right if I could only be understood at the price of profound friendship.*

“*Self-Control*—Those moralists who command man first of all and above all to gain control of himself thus afflict him with a peculiar disease; namely, a constant irritability in the face of all natural stirrings and inclinations—as it were, a kind of itching. Whatever may henceforth push, pull, attract, or impel such an irritable person from inside or outside, it will always seem to him as if his self-control were endangered. No longer may he entrust himself to any instinct or free wingbeat; he stands in a fixed position with a gesture that wards off, armed against himself, with sharp and mistrustful eyes—the eternal guardian of his castle. Of course, he can achieve *greatness* this way. But he has certainly become insufferable to others, difficult for himself, and impoverished and cut off from the most beautiful fortuities of his soul. Also from all further *instruction*. For one must be able to lose oneself occasionally if one wants to learn something from things different from oneself.” (*The Gay Science* § 305)

How can transcendence be avoided in education? For millennia, evidently, human beings grew up with transcendence (taboos). Without transcendence, who could reach the point we have reached (where humanity is)? Begin in the simplest way: with small and large needs . . . We cause children to discover the nothingness that comes out of their bodies; we build their life on an execration. From the outset we define for them this power that lifts them up, separated from filth, without any commingling imaginable.

Capitalism dies—or will die—(according to Marx) following concentrations. Similarly, transcendence has become mortal by condensing the idea of God. From the death of God—who bears the destiny of transcendence within Him—flows the insignificance of big words—of every solemn exhortation.

Without movements of transcendence—melting imperative moods—human beings would have remained animals.

But the return to immanence takes place on the heights where human beings exist.

It raises humanity to the point where God was situated insofar as it brings back to the human level the existence that seemed to overwhelm human beings.

The state of immanence signifies the negation of nothingness (thereby that of transcendence; if I only deny God, I cannot draw the immanence of the object from this negation). We come to the negation of nothingness by two paths. First, passive, that of pain: that crushes, annihilates so well that the being is dissolved. The second, active, that of consciousness: if I have an marked interest for nothingness, depraved, but already lucid (even in vice, in crime, I discern a surpassing of the limits of being), I can thereby attain a clear consciousness of transcendence, and at the same time of its naive origins.

By “negation of nothingness,” I am not imagining some equivalent to the Hegelian negation of negation. I want to speak of “communication” attained without first having to propose degradation or crime. Immanence signifies “communication” at the same level, without descent or ascension; nothingness, in this case, is no longer the object of an attitude proposed by it. If you will, profound pain spares any recourse to the realms of vice and sacrifice.

The summit that I have a passion to reach—but that I have seen elude my desire—chance attains at every extremity: in the disguise of misfortune . . .

Being real misfortune, could this be chance?

Here it is necessary to slip from one point to another, by saying: “It is not misfortune since it is the *summit (defined by desire)*. If a misfortune is the *summit*, this misfortune is fundamentally chance. Reciprocally, if the *summit* is attained by misfortune—passively—this is because it is essentially a thing of chance, which occurs outside of will, of merit.”

In the *summit*, what attracted me—responding to desire—was the surpassing of the limits of being. And in the tension of my will, the degradation (my own or that of the object of desire) being the sign of surpassing, being expressly intended by me. It was the grandeur of evil, of degradation, of nothingness, that gave its value to positive transcendence, to moral commandments. This play became habitual for me . . .³⁰

When the being itself becomes time—when it is so eroded within—when the movement of time makes it, at length, through sufferings

and abandonment, a sieve through which time flows, which opens it to immanence, nothing differentiates the being from the possible object any longer.

Suffering abandons the subject, the inside of the being, to death.

Habitually, on the contrary, we seek the effect or the expression of time that is nothingness in the object. I find nothingness in the object, but then something frightened in me holds itself back: hence transcendence, as a height from which one dominates nothingness.

VII

*If ever one breath came to me of
the creative breath of that heavenly
need that constrains even accidents to
dance star-dances;*

*If I ever laughed the laughter of
creative lightning which is followed
obediently but grumbly by the
long thunder of the deed;*

*If I ever played dice with gods at their
table, the earth, till the earth quaked
and burst and snorted up floods of
fire—for the earth is a table for gods
and trembles with creative new words
and the dice throws of the gods . . .*

Zarathustra, The Seven Seals, § 3

*But what of that, you dice-throwers!
You have not learned to play and
mock as a man ought to play and
mock! Are we not always seated at a
great table for games and mockery?*

*Zarathustra, Of the
Higher Man, § 14*

My bodily—nervous—fatigue is so great that, if I had not attained this simplicity, I think I would suffocate from anguish.

Often, unfortunates, far from attaining immanence, devoted themselves to this God whose transcendence came from a *willful* evocation of nothingness. In contrast: my life proceeds from immanence and its movements, yet I reach a proud sovereignty, raising my personal transcendence above the nothingness of possible degradation. Each life is composed of subtle equilibriums.

I used to let myself be drawn toward all things equivocal—the guillotine, the gutter, prostitutes . . . enchanted by degradation and evil. I had this heavy, dark, anguished feeling that overwhelms people, evoked by songs like “The Widow.”³¹ I was torn apart by this sense of the dawn, fundamentally dependent upon degradation—that only led to a religious half-light—that linked spasms to dirty images.

I was at the same time worried about self-control, hard on myself and proud. Sometimes even struck by the glamour of the military that derives, in a blunt incomprehension, from a proud contemplation of nothingness—essentially making arrangements with the evil of which it is the transcendent negation (sometimes drawing its strength from an apparent reprobation, sometimes from a compromise).

I persisted for a long time, attempting to exhaust the dregs of these cursed possibilities. I was hostile to reasoned arguments, which take account of the individual being, by calculating clear interests. Reason itself is hostile to the desire to exceed limits—which are not uniquely those of the individual but its own.

In the second part of this book, I attempt to elucidate this state of mind. Schematically, I am trying to evoke the *pious terror* that it inspires in me even today.

(On this subject, I think that the essential element of the *will to power* is missed if one does not see the *love of evil* in it, not its utility but its value signifying the summit.)

At the end of the second part, when I affect a reckless attitude and a challenging tone, undoubtedly it's with the same feeling that I have now.

Even now, I can only risk myself, without *knowing*.

(I am not one of those people who say: “Do this and the result surely won't fail.”)

However by advancing and risking myself—shrewdly, undoubtedly (but this shrewdness every time was a “throw of the dice”), I changed the appearance of the difficulties from the outset.

1) Seen in the context of immanence, the summit by definition cancels certain difficulties raised in regard to mystic states (at least of the states retaining, from transcendence, movements of fear and trembling, targeted by the criticism of “spiritual summits”):

—Immanence is received, it is not the result of a search; it is entirely on the side of chance (of which, in these areas wherein intellectual methods are multiplied, a clear perspective cannot be given, if a decisive moment exists, it is of secondary importance);

—Immanence is at once in an indissoluble movement, *immediate summit*, being in every way the destruction of the individual being, and *spiritual summit*.

2) Now I discern *in risk*, this movement that not relating the present to the future of a given being relates that being to *a being that does not exist yet*: risk, in this sense, does not assign the action to the service of the agent or to any previously existing being, in that it exceeds the “limits of the being.”

In short, if the summit escapes those who seek it (who aim at it as a goal expressed discursively), I can recognize in myself, at any moment, a movement likely to carry me toward it. If I cannot make the summit the object of a process or intention, I can make my life the long divination of the possible.

Now I describe myself like this:

Time enters me—sometimes through abandonment to death, which pain causes me despite myself—but if my life follows its normal course, following speculations that link my slightest actions to time.

To act is to speculate on a subsequent result—to sow in hopes of future harvests. The action is in this sense “at stake,” the risk being at once the work and the goods engaged—thus the plowing, the field, the grain, every part of the resources of the being.

Yet “speculation” differs from “gambling” in that it is essentially done with a view toward gain. Strictly speaking, “gambling” can be mad, independent of a concern with time to come.

The difference between speculation and gambling can be ascribed to different human attitudes.

Sometimes speculation precedes gambling. Then the risk is reduced as much as possible, the maximum is done to assure gain, the nature of which, if not the quantity, is limited.

Sometimes the love of risk entails the greatest possible risk, to the point of misunderstanding the end being pursued. The end, in this last case, cannot be fixed; its nature is to be an unlimited possibility.

In the first case, speculation on the future subordinates the present to the past. I relate my activity to a being to come, but the limit of this being is entirely determined by the past. This is a case of a closed being, wanting to be immutable and limiting its interests.

In the second case, the undefined goal is open, surpassing the limits of the being: the present activity has as its end the unknown of the time to

come. Dice are thrown with a view to the beyond of the individual being: what it is not yet. Action exceeds the limits of the being.

Speaking of the *summit*, of *decline*, I opposed concern for the future with that of the *summit*, which inscribes itself in the present time.

I've presented the summit as inaccessible. In fact, as strange as it seems, the present time is forever inaccessible to thought. Thought, language aren't interested in the present, at every moment substitute future aims for it.

What I said about sensuality and crime can't be changed. If we surpass what I said, it is a *principle* for us: the Dionysian heart of things to which, transcendence being dead, pain adheres a little more each day.

But I have grasped the possibility of acting and, in action, not being at the mercy of a pathetic desire for evil.

Strictly speaking, Nietzsche's doctrine is, remains, a cry in a desert. Rather it's a sickness, the occasion of brief misunderstandings. Its absence of fundamental goal, an innate aversion in regard to a goal—cannot be surpassed directly.³²

“We believe that with every growth of man, his other side must grow too; that the highest man, if such a concept be allowed, would be the man who represented the antithetical character of existence most strongly, as its glory and sole justification . . .” (1887–1888)³³

The ambiguity in the absence of a goal, in place of arranging things, ultimately spoils them. *The Will to power* is equivocal. It remains in a sense the will to evil, finally the will to *expenditure*, to risk (which Nietzsche emphasized). The anticipations of a human type—linked to praise for the Borgias—contradict a principle of risk, which requires free results.

If I refuse to limit the ends, I act without relating my actions to the good, to the conversation or the enrichment of given beings. Aiming at the beyond, not at given beings, means not closing, leaving the possible open.

“It is in our nature to create a being that would be superior to us. *To create what surpasses us!* This is the reproductive instinct, the instinct for action and work. As all will assumes an end, man *assumes a being* that does not exist yet but that is the end of his existence. That's the true free will! In this end are summed up love, veneration, perceived perfection, burning aspiration.” (1882–1885)³⁴

Through his idea of the child, Nietzsche expressed the principle of the open game, *in which occurrence exceeds the given*. “Why,” Zarathustra asks, “must the lion become a child?”³⁵ The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning and a game, a wheel rolling on itself, a first movement, a sacred “yes.”

The *will to power* is the lion, but isn’t the child the *will to chance*?

When still young, Nietzsche noted: “‘Play,’ the useless—as the ideal of him who is overfull of strength, as ‘childlike.’ The ‘childlikeness’ of God.” (1872–1873)³⁶

It seems to me that the Hindu Ramakrishna arrived at the state of immanence. He said of God, “. . . he is my playmate. There is no rhyme or reason in the universe. Folly! Tears and laughter are all characters in a play. Oh, the entertainment of the world! Schools of children let loose, who is to praise or blame? There is no reason. There is no brain. We are fooled with a little thought, a little reason. But this time I won’t be trapped. *Play is my motto*. Beyond reason and science and all words, there is love.”³⁷

I’m thinking—who knows—of a way of speaking so joyful that it nevertheless deforms the reality that it describes. In the state of immanence, tragedy, a feeling of mad farce, *and the greatest simplicity coincide*. Simplicity is decisive. Immanence differs *little* from any state whatsoever and it precisely consists in this: this *little*, this *next to nothing*, matters more than the most important thing.

It might be that *play as motto*, that *love* obscure the truth.

But this is not, I don’t think, a risk, if these few lines establish an equivalence between the object grasped in immanence and the infinite perspectives of play.

The state of immanence implies complete self-“risk,” such that only an independent occurrence of will can push a being as far.

The trickery of transcendence suddenly unveiled, seriousness dissipates forever. However, in the absence of seriousness the infinite depth of play escapes again: play is the quest, from occurrence to occurrence, for infinite possibilities.

In any event.

The state of immanence signifies *beyond good and evil*.

It is linked to nonasceticism, to the freedom of the senses.

It is the same as the naïveté of play.

Arriving at immanence, our life finally leaves the phase of the masters.

August 1944

Epilogue¹

If one day I were shattered, separating if not all of my life from the masses, at least the part of my life that matters to me—if the masses dissolved in an endless immanence—this would only happen through exhaustion. At the moment in which I am writing, transcending the masses is spitting in the air: the spit just falls . . . Transcendence (noble existence, moral contempt, sublime attitude) has fallen into comedy. We still transcend existence weakly: but on the condition of losing ourselves in immanence, of struggling equally for all of the others. I would detest the movement of transcendence in myself (the split decisions), if I didn't immediately grasp its cancellation in some immanence. I see it as essential to always be *at the human level*, to only transcend degradation, plaster cast transcendence. If I were not myself at the level of the workers, I would feel my transcendence above them like a gob of snot, hanging from my nose. I feel like that in cafés, in public places . . . I physically judge the beings with whom I assemble, who cannot be either above or below me. I differ profoundly from a worker, but my feeling of *immanence*, when talking to workers, if sympathy brings us together, is the sign indicating my place in the world: that of a wave in the middle of the sea. Meanwhile the bourgeois, *secretly* competing with one another, seem condemned to an empty exteriority.

On one side, transcendence, reduced to a comedy (that of a master—lord of the manor—linked once upon a time with risking death, running with sword in hand), product of human beings whose vulgarity affirms deep immanence. But I imagine the bourgeoisie destroyed—in some legitimate slaughter—equal with those who would remain. Wouldn't this infinite immanence in its turn empty itself of meaning, a monotonous reproduction of workers, a multitude without history and without difference?²

It's very theoretical!

In any case, the feeling of immanence within the masses, which nothing henceforth would transcend, responds to a need that is no less necessary in me than physical love. If in order to respond to a greater demand, such as the desire for gambling, I had to isolate myself in some *new* transcendence, I would be in the painful state in which people die.

This afternoon, four American airplanes attacked an oil and gas train in a station a kilometer from here with bombs, artillery, and machine guns.

Flying low, they turned above the rooftops then shot through the columns of black smoke: terrible, fat insects, they surged up again above the train, hurtling into the sky. Every few minutes one passed over our heads, plunging with thundering machine guns, motors, bombs, rapid-fire artillery. Without danger I watched the show for a quarter of an hour: it transfixed the spectators. They trembled and marveled, then thought of the victims *after the fact*. Thirty train cars or so burned: for hours an immense cloud of smoke rose up, as if from a crater, darkening a part of the sky. A large number of children were gathered at an aquatic festival a few hundred meters from the train. There were no injuries or deaths among them.

The radio no longer reports the advances of the armored columns. I nevertheless imagine that they are fewer than fifty kilometers away. Two small trucks of German troops stopped in front of me: they were looking for a bridge over the Seine . . . fleeing east, haphazardly.

For the first time I've grasped the sensation (and from a rather firm point of view): this war is a war of transcendence against immanence. The defeat of National Socialism is related to the isolation of transcendence, Hitler's illusion forcefully unleashed through the movement of transcendence. This force coagulates a greater force against itself—slowly—through the reactions that it causes within immanence. Only the limit of isolation remains.

In other words, the essence of fascism was national transcendence; it can't become "universal"; it draws its singular strength from "particularity." This is the way it lost the cause it represented, even though it had a universal side to it. In each country, numerous individuals would have liked to control the masses, with personal transcendence as their goal. They sought this in vain, being unable to offer to follow the masses in their movement—to transcend the rest of the world. It's possible in a single country: the transcendence of a satellite (Italy) becomes comical in the middle of a war (this war has not demonstrated the basic inferiority of Italian fascism to German fascism but the fact that together, subordinated to a greater movement, it was overshadowed).

It is also comical to pretend to be an "Owl of Minerva," speaking after the fact, being unable to greet those who fall with bursts of laughter. Clarity or cruelty? Clarity . . . Immanence is freedom; it's laughter. "The short tragedy," said Nietzsche, always ends by serving the eternal comedy of existence, and the sea, to "the uncountable laughter"—citing Aeschylus—"must in the end overwhelm even the greatest of these tragedians." (*The Gay Science* § 1)

I imagine a split across immanence, each of the parties contesting the authenticity of the other, only approaching authenticity through the fact that they contest and are contested. Tension, if not war, necessary between the two . . . Neither is what it claims to be.

Completed the outline for a coherent philosophy . . .

Interminable wait. Numerous explosions in the night. Yesterday the mayor (pro-German) announced that the Americans had entered Paris. I doubt it. At the moment in which I am writing, a violent explosion, a child howling. Everyone is overexcited from waiting. The day before yesterday, the Americans passed by, ten kilometers from here. In addition to the usual interests, I personally have a morbid reason for waiting—certainly for their entering into Paris. It is not probable that an important battle will devastate the region. The Germans are leaving.

Only transcendences (discontinuities) are intelligible. Continuity is only intelligible in relation to its opposite. Pure immanence and the nothingness of immanence are equivalent, signifying *nothing*.

Pure transcendence would not be intelligible either, if it was not repeated, which is to say: if it was not represented infinitely in the homogenous realm of immanence.

Communications cut, reduced to an absolute solitude. With the Germans gone for ten days, a kind of *no man's land* has been set up around the forest, it seems, where the Americans won't enter. Unexpectedly, the roads are empty, nights silent . . . Few airplanes, the noise of explosions has stopped. We don't hear either bombs or artillery. All of life—people, armies—dissolved (exhausted) itself in waiting. I've stopped seeking uncertain news. The only news that matters to me now, the arrival of the Americans here, their entrance in Paris, will come to me on its own.

In these conditions, uncertainty about K. torments me and, in this closed-off solitude, wears me out, destroys me.

The relative slowness of the military operations gives way to reasonable fears.

The question of fighting in Paris.

I experience a relief imagining, for myself, I have no idea what excess suffering, in place of the rapid liberation that is expected. We sometimes prefer to confront the horror rather than to be patient.

My nerves are ragged: at times at least. I pull myself together and have self-control while writing. It's getting dark, the electricity is out; I'm reluctant to burn candles. I want to write, not to give in to anxiety. For months, I've understood the separation to which the approach of the military operations condemned me: today I can say of my solitude that it oppresses me to be unable to do anything. The nothingness of absence—which can be definitive—my rage in fact proves it today, I'm suffocating. How unnerved I am to live out this rejection of the nothingness that suffocates the lie of transcendence: if it were pure, authentic nothingness, torture, I think, would be lighter. If this were about dying, it would still be a lie; and undoubtedly the lie of the loss of a beloved is more obvious. But the lie of living attenuated, uncovered, the sadness of dying, while the lie of love increases the horror of losing the beloved. In each case, the evidence of the lie suppresses only a part of the effect: the lie has become our truth. What I call lying, what the lie fundamentally is, is only a lie fundamentally: it is rather the *impotence* of the truth. The feeling of impotence that shatters us, if loss—and not our lassitude—causes us to see that we worked ourselves up—ends up shaking our own nerves. The attachment can't be suppressed. The separation is no less hard, and what brings about the proclaimed lucidity is not detachment but the idea that even a return can respond to this thirst that remains at the heart of the deception.

Feeling twenty years younger.

I've found a divine, diabolical, musical-comedy messenger.

Saw K., artillery thundered and we heard machine-gun fire!

This evening, up in a tower, the immense forest under low clouds and rain, the war reached its limits, from southwest to the east, a dull rumbling.

The nearby fighting, the noise of which a number of us have gone out to hear from the rocks, does not give me any anxiety. Like my neighbors, I perceive the invisible and enigmatic expanse where it is unfolding; I overhear the inconsistent conjectures. There's no *no man's land*. In front of us, the Germans—hardly numerous—have created an obstacle to the American advance. That's what I know. The news on the radio is confused, in disagreement with the German resistance before us. In our complete or nearly complete ignorance, the sounds of artillery and machine guns and distant incendiary bombs are banal problems. If there is some grandeur in these noises, it is that of the unintelligible. They suggest neither the

murderous nature of the projectiles nor the immense motions of history, not even an approaching danger.

I feel empty and tired: I'm still not writing, not due to enervation. I need rest, foolish fun, and laziness. I'm reading novels by Hervieu and Marcel Prévost in magazines from the 1890s.

The Germans are undoubtedly giving up. The artillery in the night shakes the doors. At dusk, twenty some inexpressibly violent explosions (an important munitions depot went up): I felt the shock of the air between my legs and on my shoulders. Seven kilometers away, the flames lit up the sky. I saw one of the explosions from the rocks. On the horizon, immense red and blinding flames rise up in the black smoke. This forest horizon is the same as three months ago: at that time I lamented a lack of imagination. Then I couldn't imagine the destruction and laceration of a battle in this beautiful countryside (like a ocean of trees animated by immense, slow waves). Today I saw vast fires, three or four places where canons raged, overcome finally by these colossal sounds of explosions. But the children were laughing on the rocks. The calmness of the world remains unshaken.

Finally the news is less confusing. Two people who arrived from Paris on bicycles tell me what's happening: street fighting, the French flag at city hall, and *L'Humanité* on the newsstands. The same people tell me that the fighting is near Lieusaint and Melon. Melon might fall this evening, which would decide the fate of the forest.

Went to the rocks at nine o'clock. Strong canon fire. It went silent, but the sound of the motorized column in the forest could be heard clearly.

I went back, stretched out on my bed. Screams woke me from a half-sleep. I went to the window and saw women, children running. They cried out to me that the Americans were here. I went out and found tanks surrounded by a crowd, almost like a fairground, but more animated. No one is more sensitive to this type of emotion than I. I spoke with the soldiers. I laughed.

The look of these American men, their clothes, their gear is pleasant to me. These men from overseas seem more self-contained, more whole than we.

In any case, the Germans exude transcendent mediocrity. The "immanence" of the Americans is undeniable (their being is in itself and not beyond).

The crowd brought flags, flowers, champagne, pears, tomatoes, and put the children up on the tanks five hundred meters from the Germans.

The tanks arrived at noon and were on the road in two hours. Fighting immediately raged one kilometer down the road. A part of the afternoon passed with bursts of machine-gun fire, deafening canon fire, and rifle shots. From the top of the rocks, I saw smoke rising up from a bombed village, from which the German artillery were firing. Surrounded by fires! Melun burning in the distance, exhaling smoke like a volcano. The rocks command an immense expanse, two-thirds of it remnants of an old-growth forest, soft but wild, the Brie plains stretching out toward Melun. From time to time, in the distance, airplanes poke at a German column and, when the blow strikes, I see huge clouds of smoke rise up.

At nine o'clock, a small truck surrounded by armed members of the Resistance arrived slowly. They decked out the square where the crowd gathers with flags. The first one that they put in the truck was a tall, thin old man with the distinction of a rare bird, a general. In penitence, sitting on the edge, he had a sharp, disillusioned attitude. Surrounded by a mob of armed men. He had been in charge of the local collaborators. The "executioner's cart" at the street-corner, the victims entering into a deathly solitude: there was something hideous about it. The crowd applauded the arrival of a woman and sang the *Marseillaise*. The woman, a little, forty-year-old bourgeois, took up the *Marseillaise* with the others. She seemed mean, narrow-minded, stubborn. It was repugnant, ridiculous, to hear her sing. Night fell: the low, black sky signaling a storm. They brought the mayor and some others. There were disagreements about the mayor, a scuffle. Slowly the loaded truck began to move. Bareheaded men, armed with rifles and machine guns, climbed on with the prisoners. The *Chant du départ* resounded bitterly among the agitated crowd. The night was partly reddened by the glare of the fires. At times, flashes of lightning illuminated everything, blinding and maintaining a kind of senseless quivering. Toward the end, the canons close by (the lines are only five hundred meters away) resounded with an extreme violence, completing the expansiveness of this execration.

I fear those who, conveniently, reduce the game of politics to propagandistic naïveté. Personally, the idea of hatreds, hopes, hypocrisies, foolishnesses (in a word, the dissimulation of *interests*, accompanying these large movements of weapons breaks me up. The appearance and disappearance of the fires on the battlefield, the passage, like a charging gallop in the streets, of artillery fire, the din of explosions, seem more ponderous to me than, in an ordinary way, all the weight linked to the destiny of the human species.

What strange reality pursues its ends (different from those that we see) or doesn't pursue the slightest end through this noise?

Now difficult to doubt that our immense convulsion necessarily intends the destruction of the old order, with its lies, its shouts, its fashionable society, its sick sweetness; on the other hand, the birth of a world in which unchecked *real* forces are in play. The past (the deceit of its survival) is dying completely: Hitler's ponderous effort is still exhausting its resources.

In this regard evidently: it's unfortunate for those who won't see the time come to cast off old habits and enter *naked* into the new world, whose possibility will have the *never seen* as its condition!

But what does this globe being born want, seek, signify?

Torn apart, this morning: my wound reopening at the slightest knock, once again, an empty desire, an inexhaustible suffering! A year ago, I distanced myself, in a moment of decisive fever, from every possibility of rest. For a year, I've lived in convulsions like a fish on the sand. And I burn and I laugh, I set myself ablaze . . . Suddenly: emptiness appears, absence. From then on I am *in the depths of things*: of these depths, the blaze seems to have been only betrayal.

How can one avoid knowing once—then again, and endlessly—the lie of the objects for which we burn? Nevertheless, in this senseless darkness, more distant than every nonsense, than every collapse, passion still lacerates me to “communicate” to those I love the news of nightfall, as if this “communication,” and none other, were the sole measure of so great a love. Thus reborn—endlessly, here or there—the mad fulguration of chance—demanding—from us, as a precondition, the understanding of the lie, of the nonsense that it is.

O summit of the comical! . . . that we must flee the emptiness (insignificance) of an infinite immanence, dedicating ourselves like madman to the life of transcendence! But this lie lights up the immanent immensity with its madness: it is no longer pure nonsense, the pure void, *it is* that depth of full being, that true depth before which the vanity of transcendence dissolves. We would never have known immanent immensity—for *ourselves*—if it had not existed, and perhaps that was the only way that it could have existed, *for itself*, if we hadn't first constructed, then denied, demolished, transcendence.

(Will I be followed this far?)

It's true, this direction is given by a commonly perceived light that announces the word FREEDOM.

To which I'm deeply attached.

I don't know if concern, moral disquiet have ever torn up a man more cruelly. I am not at this moment among those who teach: every affirmation is prolonged in me, as the sound of the bombs, the disorder, the dust, the moans are in a bombed-out town.

But like a people, the past event, every time, finds itself already further away from its misfortune (tears dried up, cunningly, closed faces light up and laughter again breaks out), thus the "tragedy of reason" changes in senseless variety.

Appendix

I

Nietzsche and National Socialism¹

Nietzsche attacked idealist morality. He ridiculed kindness and pity, unmasked hypocrisy and the absence of virility hidden beneath humanitarian sentimentality. Like Proudhon and Marx, he affirmed the beneficial element of war. Very distant from the political parties of his times, he came to articulate the principles of an aristocracy of “masters of the world.” He praised beauty and physical strength, having a decided preference for turbulent, risky life. These decided value judgments, in contrast to liberal idealism, led the fascists to lay claim to him and certain antifascists to see him as a precursor to Hitler.

Nietzsche had a presentiment of a near future when conventional limits opposed to violence would be surpassed, when real forces would clash in conflicts of outsized proportions, when every existing value would be materially and brutally contested. Imagining the fate of a period of wars whose harshness would surpass all limits, he had no idea that these wars should be avoided at any cost or that the experience would exceed human strength. Even these catastrophes seemed preferable to him to stagnation, to the lie of bourgeois life, to the vulgar happiness preached by moralists. In principle, he asked this: if there is a true value for humanity and if the stipulations of received morality, of traditional idealism, were opposed to the coming of this value, if life would overturn received morality. Marxists similarly believe that moral prejudices opposing the violence of revolution are inclined toward an eminent value (the emancipation of the proletariat). Distinct from that of Marxism, the nature of the value Nietzsche affirmed is less universal: the emancipation that he desired was not that of a class in relation to other classes, but that of human life, in the species of its best representatives, in relation to the moral servitude of the past. Nietzsche dreamt of a humanity that would not flee a tragic fate, but would love it and incarnate it to its fullest degree, which would no longer lie to itself and would raise itself above social servitude. This kind of human being differs from present humanity, which habitually confuses itself with a function, which is to say with only a part of human possibility: Nietzsche’s

human being would be in a word the *whole human being*, liberated from the servitudes that limit us. Nietzsche did not want to define this free and sovereign humanity, halfway between modern man and the overman. With just cause he thought that one cannot define something that is free. Nothing is more vain than assigning, limiting something that does not yet exist: it must be desired, and desiring the future is recognizing above all the right of the future not to be limited by the past, to surpass the known. According to the principle of the primacy of the future over the past,* upon which he faithfully insisted, Nietzsche is the man most foreign to something that, in the name of death, execrates life, and in the name of reaction, execrates dreams. Between the ideas of a reactionary, fascist or otherwise, and Nietzsche's ideas, there is however a difference: a radical incompatibility. Refusing to limit the future—to which he granted every right—Nietzsche nevertheless evoked it, in vague and contradictory suggestions, which led to excessive confusion. It is vain to attribute to him some measurable intention in terms of electoral politics, arguing that he spoke of the "masters of the world." For Nietzsche, it was a question of hazarding an evocation of the possible. He conceived of this sovereign humanity, which he hoped would shine, contradictorily: sometimes rich, sometimes poorer than a worker, sometimes powerful, sometimes hunted down. He required of this being the virtue of bearing everything, just as he recognized its right to transgress norms. Moreover, he distinguished this being, in principle, from powerful men. He limited nothing, confining himself to describing a field of possibilities as freely as he could.

That said, it seems to me that if Nietzscheanism must be defined, there is little point in dwelling on that part of the doctrine that grants rights to *life* over *idealism*. The rejection of classical morality is common to Marxism,** Nietzscheanism, and National Socialism. Only the value in the name of which life affirms its higher rights is essential. This principle of judgment established, the Nietzschean values related to racist values are altogether situated in opposition to racist values.

—Nietzsche's initial stance sets out from an admiration for the Greeks, the most intellectually accomplished men of all times. Everything

*The primacy of the future over the past—essential to Nietzsche—has nothing to do with that of the future over the present, about which I have spoken above.

**Which on the level of morality is situated as a continuation of Hegelianism. Hegel had already separated himself from the tradition. And Henri Lefebvre is right in saying that Nietzsche did "the work of an occasionally overzealous popularizer of the immoralism implied in Hegel's historical dialectic" (Lefebvre, *Nietzsche* (1939)). On this point Nietzsche is responsible, in Lefebvre's terms, for having "pushed through open doors."

is subordinated in Nietzsche's mind to culture, while in the Third Reich, culture is reduced, in the end, to military force.

—One of the most significant traits of Nietzsche's work is the exaltation of Dionysian values, which is to say of drunkenness and infinite enthusiasm. It is not by chance that Rosenberg, in his *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, denounces the cult of Dionysus as non-Aryan!¹ . . . Despite quickly repressed tendencies, racism admits only militaristic values. "The youth need stadiums, not sacred groves," Hitler claims.

—I've already mentioned the opposition of the past to the future. Nietzsche designates himself strangely as the *child of the future*. He himself linked this name to his stateless existence. In fact, our patrimony is part of the past within us, and upon it, narrowly upon this alone, Hitlerism built its system of values: it brings no new values. Nothing is more foreign to Nietzsche, who affirmed in the face of the whole world the vulgarity of the Germans.

—Two official precursors to National Socialism prior to Chamberlain were Nietzsche's contemporaries, Wagner and Paul de Lagarde. Nietzsche is appreciated and has been pushed forward by propaganda, but the Third Reich did not make him one of its teachers as it eventually did with these others. Nietzsche was Richard Wagner's friend but he took his distance, nauseated by Wagner's Francophobia and anti-Semitic chauvinism. As for the pan-Germanist Paul de Lagarde, a text removes any doubt in his regard: "If you knew," wrote Nietzsche to Theodor Fritsch, "how I laughed last spring reading the books of that pompous and sentimental blockhead named Paul de Lagarde . . ."³

—Today we're informed as to the meaning anti-Semitic stupidity had for Hitlerian racism. Nothing is more essential to Hitlerism than the hatred of the Jews. To which this rule of conduct of Nietzsche's is opposed: "Do not frequent anyone who might be implicated in the bald-faced sham of race."⁴ There is nothing that Nietzsche affirmed in any way more completely than his hatred for anti-Semites.

It is necessary to insist on this last point. Nietzsche must be cleansed of the stain of Nazism. Certain hypocrisies must be denounced for that reason. One of them is the fact of the very sister of the philosopher, who survived him up through recent years (she died in 1935). Mrs. Elizabeth Förster, born Nietzsche, did not forget, on November 2, 1933, the difficulties that came between her and her brother from the fact of her marriage, in 1885, to the anti-Semite Bernard Förster.⁵

A letter in which Nietzsche recalls his repulsion as being *as pronounced as possible* for the man she married—designated by name—was published by her efforts. On November 2, 1933, in Weimar, in the house where

Nietzsche died, Mrs. Elizabeth Judas-Förster received Adolf Hitler, Führer of the Third Reich. On this solemn occasion, this woman attested to the family's anti-Semitism by reading a text by . . . Bernard Förster!

"Before leaving Weimar to return to Essen," reports the *Times* on November 4, 1933, "Chancellor Hitler went to visit Mrs. Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, sister of the celebrated philosopher. The old woman made him the gift of a sword cane that had belonged to her brother. She invited him to visit the Nietzsche archives.

"Mr. Hitler listened to her read from a memoir addressed in 1879 to Bismarck by Doctor Förster, the anti-Semitic agitator who protested against the invasion of Germany by the Jewish spirit. Holding Nietzsche's cane in hand, Mr. Hitler passed through the cheering crowd."

Nietzsche, writing a contemptuous letter to the anti-Semite Theodor Fritsch in 1887, ended that letter in this way: "And finally, how do you think I feel when the name Zarathustra comes out of the mouth of anti-Semites?"***⁶

***On these questions see: Nicolas, *De Nietzsche à Hitler* (1937), *Nietzsche et les fascistes: Une Réparation* (special issue of *Acéphale* (January 1937)), Henri Lefebvre, *Nietzsche* (1939).

II

Nietzsche's Inner Experience

The “experiences” presented in this book have less of a place in it than in the preceding two. Moreover, they do not stand in the same relief. But this is only an appearance. The essential interest of the book actually touches on moral disquiet. The “mystic states” no longer have primary importance here, because the moral question has been posed in regard to them.

It might seem excessive to grant such a role to these states in a book “on Nietzsche.” Nietzsche’s work has little to do with the mystic quest. Nevertheless Nietzsche experienced a kind of ecstasy and said so (*Ecce Homo*, Zarathustra, § 3, quoted above).

I wanted to enter into a comprehension of the “Nietzschean experience.” I believe that Nietzsche was thinking of “mystic states” in the passages in which he speaks of the divine.

“And how many new gods are still possible!” he wrote in a note from 1888. “As for myself, in whom the religious, that is to say god-forming, instinct occasionally becomes active at impossible times—how differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time! . . . So many strange things have passed before me in those timeless moments that fall into one’s life as if from the moon, when one no longer has any idea how old one is or how young one will yet be . . .” (1888)⁷

I link this text with two others:

“To see tragic natures sink and *to be able to laugh*, despite the deep understanding, emotion and sympathy that one feels, that is divine” (1882–1884).⁸

“My first solution: tragic *pleasure* in watching what is highest and best sink (because one considers it too limited in relation to the Whole); but this is only a mystic way of approaching the superior ‘good.’

“My second solution: supreme good and supreme evil are identical” (1884–1885).⁹

The “divine states” that Nietzsche experienced would have had for an object a tragic content (time), as movement the reduction of the tragic element transcendent in the immanence implicated by laughter. In the second quotation, *too limited in relation to the Whole*, is a reference to the same movement. A *mystic way of approaching* would mean a mystic mode of feeling, in the sense of experience and not of mystic philosophy. If this is the case, the tension of extreme states would be experienced as a search for a *superior “good.”*

The expression *supreme good and supreme evil are identical* could also be understood as a fact of experience (object of ecstasy).

The importance Nietzsche himself granted to his extreme states is expressly emphasized in this note: “The new feeling of power: the mystic state; and the clearest, most daring rationalism serving the path to reach it. Philosophy: the expression of an extraordinarily elevated state of the soul” (1884).¹⁰ The expression “*elevated state*” designating the “mystic state” can already be found in *The Gay Science* § 288 (quoted above).

This passage testifies, among others, to the equivocation introduced by Nietzsche, speaking incessantly of *power* when he is thinking of the power of giving. In fact, we can take into account another note (from the same period): “Definition of the mystic: he who has enough and too much of his own happiness, and who seeks a language for his own happiness since it would like to *give it away*” (1884).¹¹ In this way Nietzsche defined a movement from which Zarathustra partly derived. The mystic state elsewhere linked with power here is more rightly the desire to give.

This book has this profound meaning: that the extreme state escapes human will (insofar as man is action, is project), that one cannot even speak without altering one’s nature. But the decisive value of this prohibition can only lacerate those who desire, who speak: at the same time that one cannot, one in fact must desire and speak. And for myself, I’ve *had enough, I’ve had too much of my own happiness.*

III

Inner Experience and Zen¹²

The Zen Buddhist sect existed in China from the sixth century. Today it is flourishing in Japan. The Japanese word Zen translates the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, designating Buddhist meditation. Like yoga, *dhyāna* is a breathing exercise for ecstatic ends. Zen distinguishes itself from common paths through an evident contempt for gentle forms. The basis of Zen piety is meditation, but its only purpose is a moment of illumination called *satori*. No comprehensible methods permit access to *satori*. It is sudden derangement, an abrupt opening, which unleashes some unforeseen strangeness.

Kyogen, whose master Yisan refused to teach him, was desperate. “One day, while he was weeding and sweeping the ground, a pebble that he had just thrown aside hit a stalk of bamboo. The sound produced a shock that lifted his spirit in an unexpected way to the state of *satori*. The question Yisan posed became luminous; his joy was without limit; it was *as if he had recovered a lost parent*. Moreover, he then understood the kindness of his older brother, whom he had neglected when he had refused to instruct him. For he now knew that this would never have happened if Yisan had been so stripped of kindness as to explain things to him” (D.T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*¹³). My emphasis on *as if he had recovered* . . .

“When the release takes place, whatever is recumbent in the mind bursts like a volcanic eruption or flashes out like a bolt of lightning. Zen calls this ‘returning to one’s own home’ . . .” (Suzuki¹⁴).

Satori can come about “from hearing an undistinguishable sound, an unintelligible remark, watching a flower as it opens, or encountering some trivial everyday incident: falling, rolling up a mat, using a fan, etc.” (Suzuki¹⁵).

A monk arrived at *satori* “at the moment when, walking in a courtyard, he stumbled” (Suzuki¹⁶).

“Baso twisted Hyakujo’s nose . . .” and opened his mind (Suzuki¹⁷).

The expression of Zen has often been clothed in a poetic form.¹⁸ Yodainen wrote:

If you wish to hide yourself in the North Star,
Turn around and fold your hands behind the South Star.

(Suzuki¹⁹)

SERMONS OF JUN MEN.

“One day . . . he said: ‘The Bodhisattva Vasudeva changes without any reason into a stick.’ So saying he traced a line on the ground with his own stick and continued: ‘All Buddhas, as innumerable as grains of sand, are here to speak all kinds of nonsense.’ Then he left the room.

“Another time, he said: ‘Of everything I have said up till now, what has been the point in the end? Today, again, being unable to help myself, I am here to speak to you once again. In this vast universe, is there something that stands before you or that makes you a slave? If ever the smallest thing, even as small as a pinpoint, is found on your path or obstructs your passage, remove it! . . . When you let yourselves be taken in by an old man like me, you’re already lost and have broken your legs . . .’

“Another time: ‘O look! No life persists!’ So saying, he acted as if he were falling down. Then he asked: ‘Do you understand? If not, ask this stick for an explanation!” (Suzuki²⁰).

IV

Response to Jean-Paul Sartre (Defense of *Inner Experience*)²¹

What is disorienting in my manner of writing is that its seriousness is misleading. This seriousness is not a lie, but what can I do if extreme seriousness dissolves into hilarity? Put directly, too great a mobility of concepts and feelings (of states of mind) does not let the slow reader grasp (establish) its possibilities.

Sartre said of me:

As soon as he has shrouded himself in nonknowledge, he refuses any concept enabling him to designate and classify what he then attains to: 'If I said decisively: "I have seen God," that which I see would change. Instead of the inconceivable unknown—wildly free before me, leaving me wild and free before it—there would be a dead object and matter for the theologian.' Yet not everything is so clear. He now writes: 'I have of the divine an experience so mad that one will laugh at me if I speak of it,' and, further on, 'God speaks to me, the idiot, face to face . . .' Lastly at the beginning of a curious chapter that contains a whole theology, he again explains his refusal to name God, but in a rather different way: 'What, at bottom, deprives man of all possibility of speaking of God, is that, in human thought, God necessarily conforms to man insofar as man is weary, famished for sleep and for peace.' These are no longer the scruples of an agnostic who, faced with atheism and faith, intends to keep matters in suspense. This is genuinely a mystic speaking, a mystic who has seen God and rejects the all-too-human language of those who have not. The distance separating these two passages contains the whole of M. Bataille's bad faith.²²

Sartre's opposition helps me put what is essential into relief. This particular experience that human beings have and name the God experience, I believe we alter by naming. Any representation of an object suffices for the subject; precautions here change nothing. On the contrary, if the name is avoided, the theology dissolves and is only there as a memory: the experience is returned to despair.

Fortunately Sartre described the movements of my mind, based on my book, emphasizing their foolishness from the outside, better than I could from within (I was moved): outlined, dissected by an indifferent lucidity, it must be admitted that the painful elements are shown comically (as is appropriate):

"The torture he (it's me here) cannot escape," says Sartre,

"is a torture he cannot bear either. Yet there is *nothing* but that torture. So it is this very torture that is going to be doctored. The author admits this himself: 'I teach the art of turning anguish to delight.' And here is where the slippage comes: I know nothing. All right. That means my knowledge goes so far and no further. Beyond that nothing exists, since nothing is for me only what I know. But what if I substantify my ignorance? What if I transform it into the 'night of nonknowledge'? Then it becomes something positive: I can touch it, meld myself with it. 'With nonknowledge attained, then absolute knowledge is simply one knowledge among others.' Better, I can settle into it. There was a light that lit up the darkness weakly. Now I have withdrawn into the darkness and I look on the light *from the standpoint of darkness*. 'Nonknowledge lays bare. This proposition is the summit, but must be understood in this way: lays bare, therefore I see that knowledge was hiding up to that point, but if I see, I *know*. Indeed, I know, but nonknowledge again lays bare what I have known. If nonsense is sense, the sense that is nonsense is lost, becomes nonsense again (without possible end).'

"Our author is not to be caught so easily. If he substantifies nonknowledge, he nonetheless does so with caution, as a movement, not as a thing. Nonetheless, he has pulled off the trick: nonknowledge, which previously was *nothing*, becomes the 'beyond' of knowledge. By throwing himself into it, M. Bataille suddenly finds himself *in the realm of the transcendent*. He has broken clear: the disgust, shame and nausea are left behind with knowledge. After that, little matter that he tells us 'Nothing,

neither in the fall nor in the void, is revealed,' for the essential thing is revealed: that my abjection is a nonsense and there is a nonsense of this nonsense (which is not, in any way, a return to the original sense). A passage from M. Blanchot cited by M. Bataille shows us the trick: 'The night soon appeared to him to be darker, more terrible than any other night whatsoever, as it has really emerged from a wound of thought that could no longer think itself, *of thought captured ironically as object by something other than thought.*'

"But M. Bataille precisely will not see that nonknowledge is immanent to thought. A thinking that thinks it doesn't know is still thinking. It discovers its limits *from the inside*. Yet this doesn't mean it has an overview of itself. You might as well say that *nothing* has become something on the grounds that one has given it a name.

"Indeed our author does go that far. It isn't hard to do so. You and I just write, quite straightforwardly, 'I know nothing.' But let us suppose I put inverted commas around this *nothing*. Suppose that I write, like M. Bataille, 'And, above all, "nothing," I know "nothing.'" This is a *nothing* that takes on a strange form; it detaches itself, isolates itself—it is not far from existing on its own. We have only now to call it the *unknown* and our goal is achieved. The nothing is what doesn't exist at all; the unknown is what in no way exists for me. By calling the nothing the unknown, I make it the entity whose essence it is to elude the grasp of my knowledge; and if I add that I know nothing, this means that I communicate with that entity by some means other than knowledge. Here again, M. Blanchot's text, to which our author refers, brings enlightenment: 'Through this void, therefore, it was his gaze and the object of his gaze that became mingled. Not only did this eye *that saw nothing* apprehend something, but it apprehended the cause of his vision. *It saw as an object that which caused him not to see.*' (Sartre's emphasis)

"Here, then, is the unknown, wild and free, to which M. Bataille at times gives—and at times refuses—the name of God. It is a pure hypostatized nothingness. One last effort and we shall ourselves dissolve into the night that previously only protected us: it is knowledge that creates the *object* over against the subject. Nonknowledge is 'suppression of the object and of the subject: the only means of not resulting in the possession

of the object by the subject.' There remains 'communication' or, in other words, the absorption of everything by the night. M. Bataille forgets that he has, by his own hand, constructed a universal object: Night. And this is the moment to apply to our author what Hegel said of Schelling's absolute: 'It is the night in which all cows are black.' It would seem that this abandonment to the night is a source of delight: that comes as no surprise. It is, in fact, one particular way of dissolving oneself into the *nothing*. But that nothing is skillfully contrived in such a way that it becomes *everything*. M. Bataille, as in the case . . . just now, satisfies in a roundabout way his desire to 'be everything.' With the words 'nothing,' 'night,' 'nonknowledge that lays bare,' he has quite simply prepared a nice little pantheistic ecstasy for us. We remember that Poincaré said of Riemannian geometry: replace the definition of the Riemannian plane with the definition of the Euclidian sphere and you have Euclid's geometry. Similarly, just replace M. Bataille's absolute nothing with the absolute being of substance and you have Spinoza's pantheism. We must concede, of course, that Riemann's geometry isn't Euclid's. In the same way, Spinoza's system is a white pantheism; that of M. Bataille is a black pantheism."²³

At this point, however, I must correct Sartre: *would be*, he must say, *a black pantheism* . . . if, let's say, my infinite turbulence had not in advance deprived me of any possibility of stopping. But I am content to see myself in the accusatory light of this slow thought. Undoubtedly I also saw (in some way) these inextricable difficulties—*my thought, the movement from which it sets out*—but they were like a landscape glimpsed quickly and, as I always saw, they dissolved in the movement and were reborn in other forms, accelerating a disastrous rapidity. What was dominant in these conditions was a painful sensation of dizziness: my breathless, headlong course, in these ultimate perspectives, the depth of being forming and deforming (opening and closing) never preventing me from experiencing the emptiness and stupidity of my thought, but the pinnacle was the moment when intoxicating emptiness gave my thought a consistency of fullness in which, through the intoxication itself that it offered me, nonsense took the rights of sense. In fact, if it intoxicates me, nonsense takes on this meaning: *that it intoxicates me: it is good* in this rapture to lose meaning—therefore it is a meaning of the fact of the loss of meaning. Hardly perceived, this new meaning, inconsistency appearing to me through it, nonsense again

empties me out. But the return of nonsense was the departure of an accumulated intoxication. While Sartre, never fazed or intoxicated by any movement, judging my suffering and intoxication from the outside, without experiencing them, concludes his article by dwelling too long on emptiness: "If the joys," he writes, "to which M. Bataille invites us are to be purely self-referential, if they are not to be part of the fabric of new undertakings and contribute to shaping a new humanity that will surpass itself towards new goals, then they are of no greater value than the pleasure of drinking a glass of brandy or of sunning oneself on a beach."²⁴ It's true, but here I insist: it is precisely because they are what they are—left empty—that they are prolonged within me through the perspective of anguish. What I tried to describe in *Inner Experience* is this movement that, losing all possibility of stopping, easily falls under attack by a criticism that believes it can arrest it from the outside, since criticism, itself, is not *taken up* in the movement. My dizzying fall and the *difference* that it introduces in the mind cannot be grasped by those who do not experience it themselves. Hence one can, as Sartre has, successively reproach me with leading toward God and toward the void! These contradictory reproaches support my affirmation: *I never lead.*

This is why criticism of my thought is so difficult. My response, whatever one might say, is given in advance: from well-done criticism, I could only draw, as is the case now, a new means of anguish, setting out from intoxication. I don't stop myself in the precipitation of my flight, comical in so many ways: Sartre permitting me to begin again . . . It's endless.²⁵

My attitude nevertheless draws from its ease this obvious weakness:

"Life," I said in *Inner Experience*, "will dissolve itself in death, rivers into the sea, the known in the unknown."²⁶ And death is an end effortlessly attained by life (as sea level is for water). Why would I make my desire to convince a concern? I lose myself in myself like the sea: I know that the roaring waters of the torrent are directed at me! It's because an acute intelligence sometimes appears to hide, the immense foolishness to which it is linked—of which it is only a negligible part—does not delay in returning it. The certainty of the readers' inconsistency, the friability of the most astute constructions constitutes the profound truth of books. Since appearances limit it, what truly exists is no longer the growth of a lucid thought but its dissolution in common opacity. The apparent immobility of a book deludes us: each book is also the sum of the misunderstandings that it occasions.

From now on, why exhaust myself with attempts to understand? I can only laugh at myself while writing (would I write a sentence if it

didn't make me laugh immediately?). It's like this: I bring the most rigor to the task that I can. But the feeling that a thought itself might crumble, in particular the certainty of reaching its ends precisely through failure, tears me from repose, deprives me of the relaxation that is conducive to the rigorous arrangement of things. Devoted to nonchalance—I think and express myself at the mercy of chance.

Obviously, there is no one who does not leave a part of life to chance. But it is the smallest and certainly the least conscious part possible. While I give myself free rein, I develop my thought, I make decisions about its expression, but I don't have access to myself as I would want. Even the movement of my intelligence is unfettered. I owe a minimum of order, a relative erudition to others, to happenstance, to fugitive moments of relaxation. And the rest of the time . . . In this way, my thought gains, I think, an agreement with its object—the more the better if it is destroyed—but it is poorly consciousness of itself. At the same time my thought must clarify itself completely and dissolve . . . It must, in the same being, construct and devastate itself.

Even this claim is not precise. Even the most rigorous still submit to chance: on the other hand, the demand inherent in the exercise of thought often takes me a great distance. One of the greatest difficulties encountered by intelligence is to arrange its continuation in time. In a given moment, my thought attains an appreciable rigor. But how can it be linked to my thought from yesterday? Yesterday, I was in some way another, I was responding to different concerns. The adaptation of the two remains possible, but . . .

I am no more bothered by such insufficiencies than by the multiple miseries found generally in the human countenance: humanity is linked in us to the non-satisfaction that we undergo, without ever accepting it. We distance ourselves from satisfaction; we distance ourselves by giving up the search for satisfaction. Sartre is right to recall in my regard *The Myth of Sisyphus*, though my regard, I think, is here that of all of humanity.²⁷ What we can expect of ourselves is to go as far as possible and not to succeed. What remains open in criticism, in human terms, is on the contrary an enterprise that has no meaning other than in relation to the moment in which it is completed. Can I go further? I won't wait for the coordination of all of my efforts: I am going further. I am taking the risk: free not to follow me on this adventure, readers often make use of this freedom! The critics are right to avoid danger. But in my turn I attract attention to a greater danger: that of methods that, adequate only to the *result* of knowledge, offer those they limit a *fragmented*, mutilated existence, in relation to a *whole* that is inaccessible.

Recognizing this, I will defend my positions.²⁸

I have spoken of *inner experience*: it was the statement of an object. By advancing this vague title, I did not mean to limit myself to the inner facts of this experience. Only arbitrarily can we reduce knowledge to what we draw from an intuition of a subject. Only a newborn can do that. But precisely we (who write) know nothing of a newborn other than through observation from the outside (for us the child is only an object). The experience of *separation* from a vital *continuum* (our conception and our birth), the return to the *continuum* (in our first sexual feelings and first laughter) leave no distinct memories in us: we reach the core of the being that we are only through objective processes. A *phenomenology of the developed mind* assumes the coincidence of the subjective and the objective, at the same time as a fusion of the subject and the object.* This is to say that an isolated operation is admissible only through fatigue (hence the explanation that I offered for laughter, unable to offer an explanation of the whole movement, the conjunction of its modalities remaining in suspense—there is no theory of laughter that is not an entire philosophy and, similarly, no entire philosophy that is not a theory of laughter . . .). But precisely, posing these principles, I must at the same time renounce following them: thought is produced in me in uncoordinated flashes and endlessly withdrawn from the term that its movement approaches. I don't know if in this way I'm speaking of human impotence—or my own . . . I don't know, but I have little hope of succeeding, even of some outwardly pleasing result. Is there no advantage in doing the kind of philosophy that I do: a flash in the night, language for a brief moment? . . . Perhaps on this subject, the last moment contains a simple truth.

Wanting to understand, indirectly, I tend to become the whole universe: but in this movement, I cannot be a whole man, I subordinate myself to a particular end: becoming the whole. Undoubtedly, if I could become the whole, I would also be a whole man, but *in my effort* I distance myself from that man. And how can I become the whole without being a whole man? I can only be this whole man by letting go. I cannot be that being through my will: my will is necessarily a will to succeed! But if misfortune (or chance) wants me to let go, then I would know that *I am* the whole man, *subordinated to nothing*.

In other words, the moment of revolt inherent in the will to understand beyond practical ends cannot be prolonged indefinitely: to be the whole of

*This is the fundamental requirement of Hegel's phenomenology. It is obvious that short of responding to this demand, modern phenomenology is for the mobile thought of human beings only one moment among others: a sandcastle, some kind of mirage.

the universe man must let go of his principles: accepting nothing that he is other than the tendency to go beyond what he is. This being that I am is the revolt of being, undefined *desire*. God was only a stage for this being and is now, grown through a measureless experience, comically perched on a stake.

V

Nothingness, Transcendence, Immanence

My method has as a consequence a disorder that is evidently intolerable (for me in particular!). I will clear it up if I can . . . But for now I want to clarify the meaning of some words.²⁹

For me, *nothingness* is the limit of a being. Beyond definite limits—in time, in space—a being no longer exists. For us, this non-being is full of meaning: I know that I can be *annihilated*. The limited being is only a particular being, but does the totality of being (understood as a sum of beings) exist?

Fundamentally, the *transcendence* of the being is this nothingness. It is only if it appears in the beyond of the nothingness, in a certain sense as a given fact of nothingness, that an object transcends us.

On the contrary, to the extent that I grasp in that object the extension of the existence that is initially revealed in me, the object becomes *immanent* for me.

On the other hand, an object can be active. A being (unreal or not, a human being, a god, a State), threatening others with death, reveals the nature of transcendence in itself. Its essence is revealed to me in the nothingness that defines my limits. Even its activity defines its limits. This is what expresses itself in terms of nothingness; the figure that it makes tangible is that of superiority. I must, if I can laugh at superiority, laugh at nothingness. But on the other hand, I laugh at it if I laugh at nothingness. Laughter is on the side of immanence in that nothingness is the object of laughter, but it is thus the object of a destruction.

Morality is transcendent to the extent that it appeals to the good of the being, constructed on our own nothingness (humanity given as sacred, the gods or God, the State).

A summit morality, if it were possible, would demand the opposite: that I laugh at nothingness. But without doing so in the name of a

superiority: if I kill for my country, I direct myself toward the summit but I do not reach it: I serve the good of my country, which is beyond my nothingness. An immanent morality would demand, if it were possible, that I die without reason, but demand my death in the name of that, in the name of nothing, at which I must laugh! But when I laugh at it: it is no longer a demand! If one had to die of laughter, this morality would be the movement of an irresistible laughter.

VI

Surrealism and Transcendence

Having spoken of André Breton (on page 64), I should have liked to say right away what I owe to Surrealism. If I have quoted a sentence against it, I would be going against my dominant interest.³⁰

With some knowledge of Surrealist intolerance, whoever is focused less on the letter than on the spirit will see that my questions pursue the moral interrogation that sustains Surrealism and, in the atmosphere in which I live, extends it. It is possible that Breton has gone astray in his search for an object. His concern for exteriority stops at transcendence. His method binds him to the position of *objects* to which value belongs. His honesty demands that he annihilate himself; that he devote himself to the nothingness of objects and words. This nothingness is also fake: it is committed to a competitive game, because nothingness subsists in a form of superiority. The Surrealist object is essentially aggressive: its task is annihilation. Undoubtedly, it is not servile: its attacks are *for nothing, unmotivated*. Nonetheless, it leads its author—whose will to immanence is beyond question—into the play of transcendence.

The movement that Surrealism expresses is perhaps no longer in its objects. It is, if you wish, in my books (I must say so myself, or else who would see it?). From the position of transcendent objects, which grant themselves a vain superiority to destroy, flows a slippage toward immanence and an entire sorcery of *meditations*: a more intimate destruction, a stranger upheaval, a limitless self-contestation; of self, of all things at the same time.

Memorandum

Introduction

I propose this book for long, slow meditations.

Reading, usually, is more a means of abjuring, of avoiding consequences. “Whoever understands the reader,” Nietzsche said, “no longer does anything for him.” I gathered these texts for the use of those SEARCHING FOR CONSEQUENCES. They are relatively homogeneous, drawn from writings, posthumous and not, none of which is earlier than 1880.

I imagine that no book is more worthy than this of being meditated upon—ruminated upon, endlessly. No meditation is more consequential.

Essentially, Nietzsche’s thought rises to the crest of waves, TO THE POINT WHERE THE MOST TRAGIC IS LAUGHABLE. At this height, it is difficult to maintain oneself (maybe impossible): the thought of Nietzsche himself, justifiably, maintains itself here only rarely. I have tried to indicate the path of the crests, not confining myself to known themes (will to power, eternal return . . .). If, from the indicated heights, one does not discover new perspectives, a new world—rendering the old one inhabitable—it is that one has passed to the side, that one has managed a little betrayal. Here it is necessary to choose: the time has come to be FOR or AGAINST. Passing through, avoiding the consequences—which are decisive and not only for the destiny of the individual, for that of humanity in general—signifies that one understands nothing, that one WANTS to be deaf.

It is necessary in the end to say what Nietzsche wanted: To assess or to interest oneself is to fail, to betray and TAKE SIDES—AGAINST a possible, apparently the best, the most necessary, and as such lost, human history would be reduced to an obstacle. Remaining vague, inattentive, occupied with other things, staying current, is to trample this possible underfoot, is to deliberately behave AS AN ENEMY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

I.

Essential Features

1. Whoever writes in blood and aphorisms does not want to be read but to be learned by heart.¹
2. Are not all words made for the grave and heavy? Are not all words lies to those who are light?²
3. No language runs fast enough for me: I leap into your chariot, storm! And even you I want to whip with my sarcasm.³
4. What good is a book that does not even carry us beyond all books?⁴

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5. At what height is my dwelling? Climbing, I have never counted the steps that lead up to me; where all steps cease, I have my roof and my dwelling.⁵
6. Wanderer, who are you? I see you walking on your way without scorn, without love, with unfathomable eyes; moist and sad like a sounding lead that has returned to the light, unsatisfied, from every depth—what did it seek down there?—With a breast that does not sigh, with a lip that conceals its disgust, with a hand that now reaches only slowly: who are you? What have you done? Stop here: this spot is hospitable to all, rest! And whoever you may be: what do you like now? What do you need for rest? Name it: what I have I offer to you!

“Rest? Rest? You *are* inquisitive! What are you saying! But give me, please . . .”

What? What? Say it!
“Another mask! A second mask!”⁶

7. Every profound thinker is more afraid of being understood than of being misunderstood. In the latter case, his vanity may suffer, but his heart is at stake in the first, his heart and his sympathy, which always says: “Alas, why do *you* want to have as hard a time as I did?”⁷

8. In the writings of a solitary one always also hears something of the echo of the desert, something of the whispered tones and the furtive look of solitude; in his strongest words, even in his cries, there still vibrates a new and more dangerous kind of silence and discretion. When a man has been sitting alone with his soul in confidential discord and discourse, year in and year out, day and night; when in his cave—it may be a labyrinth or a gold mine—he has become a cave bear or a treasure digger or a treasure guard and dragon; then even his concepts eventually acquire a peculiar twilight color, an odor just as much of depth as of must, something incommunicable and recalcitrant that blows cold in the face of every passerby.⁸

9. Intimacy with a great thought is intolerable. I seek and I call out to those to whom I can communicate this thought without their dying.⁹

10. God’s misery is deeper, O strange world! Reach for God’s misery, not for me! Who am I? A drunken sweet lyre, a midnight lyre, an ominous bell frog that nobody understands but that *must* speak, before the deaf.¹⁰

11. You would like to warm yourself against me? I advise you not to come too close: you might burn your hands. For look, I burn too much. I only just barely prevent my flame from bursting from my body.¹¹

12. This stretch of desert, exhaustion, disbelief, congealing in the midst of youth; this interlude of old age at the wrong time; this tyranny of pain even excelled by the tyranny of pride that refused the *consequences* of pain—and consequences are consolations—raise the tyranny of pride, this radical retreat into solitude as a legitimate defense against a contempt for men that had become pathologically clairvoyant—this fundamental restriction (commanded by the *disgust* that gradually developed out of an incautious and pampering spiritual diet, called romanticism) opposed to all that was bitter, harsh, and hurtful to understanding—but who could share these things with me?¹²

13. The voice of disillusionment: "I listened for an echo and heard nothing but praise!"¹³

14. For these men of today I do not wish to be *light*, or to be called light. *These* men I wish to blind. Lightning of my wisdom, put out their eyes!¹⁴

*

15. Something unstilled, unstillable is within me; it wants to be heard. A craving for love is in me, which speaks the language of love.

Light am I; ah, that I were night! But this is my solitude that I am dressed with light.

Ah, that I were dark and nocturnal! How I would suck at the breasts of light!

But I live in my own light and I drink back into myself the flames that I vomited out.

I do not know the pleasure of those who receive; and I have often dreamed that even stealing must be more blessed than receiving.

This is my poverty, which my hand never rests from giving; this is my jealous envy, which I see waiting eyes and the luminous nights of desire.

O misfortune of those who give! O darkening of my sun! O desiring to be devoured! O ravenous hunger in satiation!¹⁵

16. A hunger grows out of my beauty: I should like to hurt those for whom I shine; I should like to rob those to whom I give; I would like to charm them with my gifts; thus do I hunger for malice!

To withdraw my hand when the other hand already reaches out to it; to linger like the waterfall, which lingers even while it falls: thus do I hunger for malice!

My fullness plots such revenge: such spite wells up out of my solitude!

My happiness in giving died in giving; my virtue tired of itself and of its wealth.¹⁶

II.

Morality

The Death of God and the Value of the Perishable Instant

To enter into the heart of the possible—this is what Nietzsche's existence signifies—is in any case the most difficult, the heaviest. (But it is in fact decisive.)

To advance along these paths is to half want to perish, or—maybe?—more than half . . .

These paths, I should say again, have this agony: THEY LEAD NOWHERE.

On this subject, I would like to offer a hint in advance.

The morality that until now brought us from one point to another was a morality of action, offering the course and the goal.

Nietzsche's morality ceased to be ITINERARY. It is an invitation to the DANCE (divine dance, solitary, but dance, and the dance goes nowhere). For this reason—we have the habit of going, of seeking a goal—that having once received the invitation, we remain lost in anxiety, in some sort of annihilation.

This sensation of being astray does not persist out of necessity IF WE DANCE. But this is essential: We no longer have anything to DO, no escape, no goal, no direction!

*

17. The greatest events and thoughts—but the greatest thoughts are the greatest events—are comprehended last: the generations that are contemporaneous with them do not *live* such events—they live right past them. What happens is a little like what happens in the realm of the stars.

The light of the remotest stars comes last to men; and until it has arrived man *denies* that there are . . . stars.¹⁷

18. Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the marketplace, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Wither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breadth of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves."¹⁸

19. This long, dense succession of demolition, destruction, downfall, upheaval that now stands ahead: who would guess enough of it today to play the teacher and herald of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of a gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth? Even we born guessers of riddles . . . look forward to the approaching gloom without any real sense of involvement and above all without any worry and fear for *ourselves*? Are we perhaps still too much under the impression of the *initial consequences* of this event: and these initial consequences for *ourselves*, are quite the opposite of what one might perhaps expect: They are not at all sad and gloomy but rather like a new and scarcely describable kind of light, happiness, relief, exhilaration, encouragement, dawn . . .¹⁹

20. There is a great ladder of religious cruelty, with many rungs; but three of these are the most important. Once one sacrificed human beings to one's god, perhaps precisely those whom one loved most: the sacrifices of the firstborn in all prehistoric religions belong here, as well as the sacrifice of the Emperor Tiberius in the Mithras grotto of the isle of Capri, that most gruesome of all Roman anachronisms. Then, during the moral epoch of mankind, one sacrificed to one's god one's own strongest instincts, one's "nature": *this* festive joy lights up the cruel eyes of the ascetic, the "anti-natural" enthusiast. Finally, what remained to be sacrificed? At long last, did one not have to sacrifice for once whatever is comforting, holy, healing; all hope, all faith in hidden harmony, in an ultimate beatitude and justice? Didn't one have to sacrifice God himself and, from cruelty against oneself, worship the stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, the nothingness? To sacrifice God for the nothing—this paradoxical mystery of the final cruelty was reserved for the generation that is now coming up: all of us already know something of this.²⁰

21. After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.²¹

22. God is a conjecture; but who could drain all the agony of this conjecture without dying?²²

23. "You will never pray again, never adore again, never again rest in endless trust; you do not permit yourself to stop before any ultimate wisdom,

ultimate goodness, ultimate power, while unharnessing your thoughts; you have no perpetual guardian and friend for your seven solitudes; you live without a view of mountains with snow on their peaks and fire in their hearts; there is no avenger for you anymore nor any final improver; there is no longer any reason in what happens, no love in what will happen to you; no resting place is open any longer to your heart, where it only needs to find and no longer to seek; you resist any ultimate peace: man of renunciation, all this you wish to renounce? Who will give you the strength for that? Nobody yet has had this strength!"

There is a lake that one day ceased to permit itself to flow off; it formed a dam where it had hitherto flown off; and ever since this lake is rising higher and higher. Perhaps this very renunciation will also lend us the strength needed to bear this renunciation; perhaps man will rise ever higher as soon as he ceases to *flow out* into a god.²³

24. Dead are all the gods: now we want the overman to live.²⁴

25. We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. O the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Misfortune to you, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom*—and there is no longer any “land”!²⁵

26. Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes “a believer.” Conversely, one could conceive of such a joy and power of sovereignty, such a *freedom* of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence.²⁶

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27. There is good taste in piety too; and it was this that said in the end, “Away with *such* a god! Rather no god, rather make destiny on one’s own, rather be a fool, rather be a god oneself!”

"What's this I hear?" said the old pope at this point, pricking up his ears. "O Zarathustra, with such disbelief you are more pious than you believe. Some god in you must have converted you to your godlessness.

"Is it not your piety itself that no longer lets you believe in a god? And your overgreat honesty will yet lead you beyond good and evil too."²⁷

28. You see what it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honor of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long enough interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of the salvation of the soul—that is *all over* now, that has man's conscience *against* it, that is considered indecent and dishonest by every more refined conscience—mendaciousness, feminism, weakness, and cowardice.²⁸

29. Up till now, God was responsible for all living beings. Their destiny could not be divined; and precisely when the sign of pain and fragility had been impressed on the living, one supposed that it must, earlier than others, be cured of the pleasure of "living" and being in the "world." Thus it seemed marked by a sign of grace and hope. But once we no longer believed in God or in the destiny of man in the beyond, humankind became responsible for all that lives, all that, born of pain, is dedicated to suffering from life.²⁹

30. If we make *the death of God, a great renunciation* and a perpetual victory over ourselves, we would still have to *pay for this loss*.³⁰

31. I have presented such terrible images to knowledge that any "Epicurean delight" is out of the question. Only Dionysian joy is sufficient: *I have been the first to discover the tragic*. The Greeks, thanks to their moralistic superficiality, misunderstood it. Even resignation is *not* a lesson of tragedy, but a misunderstanding of it! Yearning for nothingness is a *negation* of tragic wisdom, its opposite!³¹

32. The highest tragic motives have remained unused up till now: the poets know nothing through experience of the one hundred tragedies of the man who applies himself to understanding.³²

33. As we thus reject the Christian interpretation and condemn its “meaning” as counterfeit, Schopenhauer’s question immediately comes to us in a terrifying way: *Does existence have any meaning at all?* It will require a few centuries before this question can even be heard completely and in its full depth.³³

34. Profound repulsion to the idea that I could rest once and for all in one total view of the world, whatever it might be. Charm of the opposing point of view: refusal to be deprived of the attraction of the enigmatic.³⁴

35. What we want is not to “understand,” it’s that nothing prevents us from believing what we *already know*.³⁵

36. *Not to deprive* the world of its disturbing and enigmatic character!³⁶

37. There is a point in every philosophy when the philosopher’s “conviction” appears on the stage—or to use the language of an ancient Mystery:

*Adventavit asinus,
Pulcher et fortissimus.*³⁷

38. I only see in logic itself a kind of unreason and chance.³⁸

39. An interpreter might come along who would picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all “will to power” so vividly that almost every word, even the word “tyranny” itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor—being too human—but he might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do, namely, that it has a “necessary” and “calculable” course, *not* because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment.³⁹

40. Another ideal runs ahead of us, a strange, tempting, dangerous ideal to which we should not wish to persuade anybody because we do not readily concede *the right to it* to anyone: the ideal of a spirit who plays naively—that is, not deliberately but from overflowing power and abundance—with all that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine; for whom those

supreme things that the people naturally accept as their value standards, signify danger, decay, debasement, or at least recreation, blindness, and temporary self-oblivion; the ideal of a human, superhuman well-being and benevolence that will often appear *inhuman*—for example, when it confronts all earthly seriousness so far, all solemnity in gesture, word, tone, eye, morality, and task so far, as if it were their most incarnate and involuntary parody—and in spite of all of this, it is perhaps only with him that *great seriousness* really begins, that the real question mark is posed for the first time, that the destiny of the soul changes, the hand moves forward, the tragedy *begins*.⁴⁰

41. . . . Out of such long and dangerous exercises in self-mastery one emerges as a different person, with a few more question marks—above all with the *will* henceforth to question further, more deeply, severely, harshly, evilly, and quietly than one had questioned heretofore. The trust in life is gone: life itself has become a *problem*. Yet one should not jump to the conclusion that this necessarily makes one gloomy. Even love of life is still possible, only one loves differently. It is the love for a woman that causes doubts in us. The attraction of everything problematic, the delight in an X, however, is so great in such more spiritual, more spiritualized men that this delight flares up again and again like a bright blaze over all the distress of what is problematic, over all the danger of uncertainty, and even over the jealousy of the lover. We know a new happiness . . .⁴¹

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42. Alas, what are you after all, my written and painted thoughts! It was not long ago that you were still so colorful, young, and malicious, full of thorns and secret spices—you made me sneeze and laugh—and now? You have already taken off your novelty, and some of you are ready, I fear, to become truths: you already look so immortal, so pathetically decent, so boring!⁴²

43. One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil. And why do you not want to pluck my wreath?⁴³

44. . . . I order you to lose me . . .⁴⁴

45. “Would you like to be considered irrefutable?” said his disciple.

The innovator replied: “I wish for the seedling to become a tree. For a doctrine to become a tree, it has to be believed for a good while; for it

to be believed, it has to be considered irrefutable. The tree needs storms, doubts, worms, and nastiness to reveal the nature and the strength of the seedling; let it break if it is not strong enough. But a seedling can only be destroyed—not refuted."

When he had spoken, his disciple cried impetuously: "But I believe in your cause and consider it so strong that I shall say everything, everything that I still have in my mind against it."

The innovator laughed in his heart and wagged a finger at him. "This kind of discipleship," he said then, "is the best; but it is also the most dangerous, and not every kind of doctrine can endure it."⁴⁵

46. . . . you should laugh at me like I laugh at myself . . .⁴⁶

47. Let us be enemies too, my friends! Let us strive *against* one another like gods.⁴⁷

48. That I must be a struggle, become a goal and an opposition to goals:—alas, whoever guesses my will should also guess the *crooked* paths it must take!

Whatever I create and however much I love it—I must quickly oppose it and my love; thus my will wills it.⁴⁸

49. To reach one's ideal is to escape from it and to dominate it.⁴⁹

50. The man of knowledge must not only love his enemies, he must also be able to hate his friends.⁵⁰

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51. The best parables speak of time and becoming: they praise and justify the perishable.⁵¹

52. *Dionysus*: sensuality and cruelty. Transitoriness could be interpreted as enjoyment of productive and destructive force, as *continual creation*.⁵²

53. Humanity would have perished, if the sexual instinct didn't have this blind, imprudent, hasty, unreflective nature. The satisfaction of this instinct is in no way linked, in principle, to the reproduction of the species. How strange it is that coitus should propose reproduction as its end! It is the same with the pleasures of struggle and rivalry. *If the instincts cool* by a

few degrees life will stop. It is linked to a high temperature, to the boiling point of unreason.⁵³

54. Perhaps perfect understanding would make us circle around things, shiny and cold like stars—a brief moment more! Then this would be our end, the end of beings greedy for understanding that enjoy a spider's life and happiness . . .⁵⁴

55. A certain emperor constantly thought of the instability of all things, so as not to attach too much importance to it and to remain calm. For me instability has a completely different effect; everything appears infinitely more precious, from the fact that everything is fleeting. It seems to me that the more precious vices, the most exquisite balms have always been thrown into the sea.⁵⁵

56. . . . the *Dionysian* ideal of the Greeks: the religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or in part (typical—that the sexual act arouses profundity, mystery, reverence).

Dionysus versus the “Crucified”: there you have the antithesis. It is *not* a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it. Life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to nothingness. In the other case, suffering—the “Crucified as the innocent one”—counts as the object to this life, as a formula for its condemnation.—One will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering: whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning. In the former case, it is supposed to be the path to a holy existence; in the latter case, being is counted as *holy enough* to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering. The tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering: he is sufficiently strong, rich, and capable of deifying to do so. The Christian denies even the happiest lot on earth: he is sufficiently weak, poor, disinherited to suffer from life in whatever form he meets it. The god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a *promise* of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction.⁵⁶

57. God is a thought that makes crooked all that is straight and makes turn whatever is immobile. How? Should time be gone, and all that is impermanent a mere lie?

To think this is a dizzy whirl for human bones and nausea for the stomach; verily, I call it the turning sickness to conjecture thus.

I call it evil and misanthropic—all this teaching of the One and the completed, the immobile, and imperishable!⁵⁷

58. When they speak of the “highest happiness,” weary, suffering, anxious beings dream of peace, immobility, rest, of something analogous to a very deep *sleep*. Much of this dream has passed into philosophy. In the same way, fear of the uncertain, of the equivocal, of the changing has given a place of honor, through an effect of contradiction, to the *simple*, the immobile, the foreseeable, the certain. Another kind of man would honor the inverse states.⁵⁸

59. When we use the word “happiness” in the sense that it has in our philosophy, above all we do not think like weary, anxious, and suffering philosophers, of external and internal peace, of the absence of pain, of impassibility, of quietude, of the “holy of holies,” of a position of equilibrium, of something that very nearly has the value of a deep dreamless sleep. Our world is rather uncertain, changing, variable, equivocal, a dangerous world perhaps, certainly more dangerous than the simple, immobile, foreseeable, fixed world, all that the previous philosophers—inheritors of the needs of the herd and of the anxieties of the herd—honored above all.⁵⁹

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60. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: What can be loved in man is that he is a *passage* and a *fall*.⁶⁰

61. I love those who do not know how to live, except by falling, for they are those who go beyond.⁶¹

62. I love those who despise the most because they adore the most and are arrows of desire for the other shore.⁶²

63. I love he who lives to know, and who wants to know so that the overman may live someday. And thus he wants his own fall.⁶³

64. I love he whose soul is deep, even in being wounded, and who can perish of a small experience: thus he goes gladly over the bridge.⁶⁴

65. Man is a rope, tied between the animal and the overman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping.⁶⁵

66. Is not your soul poverty and filth and wretched contentment?

Verily, man is a polluted stream. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean.

Behold, I teach you the overman. He is this sea. In him your great contempt can be lost.⁶⁶

67. I draw circles around me and sacred boundaries; fewer and fewer men climb with me on ever higher mountains: I am building a mountain range out of ever more sacred mountains.⁶⁷

68. Once I saw both the greatest man and the smallest man naked: all-too-similar to each other, even the greatest all-too-human!⁶⁸

69. Ever move, ever better ones of your kind shall perish—for it shall be ever worse and harder for you. Thus alone—thus alone, man grows to the height where lightning strikes and breaks him: lofty enough for lightning.⁶⁹

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70. *Type of my disciples.* To those human beings *who are of any concern to me* I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures.⁷⁰

71. *The great majority of people lack an intellectual conscience.* Indeed, it has often seemed to me as if anyone calling for an intellectual conscience were as lonely in the most densely populated cities as if he were in a desert.⁷¹

72. We know very well how science strikes those who merely glance at it in passing, as if they were walking by, as women do and unfortunately also many artists: the severity of its service, its inexorability in small as in great matters, and the speed of weighing and judging matters and passing judgment make them feel dizzy and afraid. Above all they are terrified to see how the most difficult is demanded and the best is done without praise and decorations. Indeed, what one hears is, as among soldiers, mostly reproaches and harsh rebukes; for doing things well is considered the rule, and failure is the exception; but the rule always tends to keep quiet.⁷²

73. I absolutely cannot see how one can later make up for having failed to go to a *good school* at the proper time. Such a man does not know himself; he walks through life without having learned to walk; his flabby muscles reveal themselves with every step. Sometimes life is so merciful as to offer this hard schooling once more later: sickness for years perhaps, which demands the most extreme strength of will and self-sufficiency; or a sudden calamity, affecting also one's wife and child, which compels one to a form of activity that restores energy to the slack fibers and toughness to the will to live. The most desirable thing is still under all circumstances a hard discipline *at the proper time*, i.e. at that age at which it still makes one proud to see that much is demanded of one. For this is what distinguishes the hard school as a good school from all others: that much is demanded, and sternly demanded; that the good, even the exceptional, is demanded as the norm; that praise is rare, that indulgence is nonexistent; that blame is apportioned sharply, objectively, without regard for talent or antecedents.⁷³

74. "In order to prove to you that man is at bottom one of the good-natured animals, I should like to remind you how credulous he has been for such a long time. Only now he has become, very late and after an immense self-conquest, a *mistrustful* animal. Yes, man is now more evil than ever before."

"I do not understand this: why should man be more mistrustful and evil now?"

"Because he now has—and needs—a science."⁷⁴

75. Honestly, supposing that this is our virtue from which we cannot get away, we free spirits—well, let us work on it with all our malice and love and not weary of perfecting ourselves in *our* virtue, the only one left us. May its splendor remain spread out one day like a gilded evening, blue and mocking, over this aging culture and its musty and gloomy seriousness! And if our honesty should nevertheless grow weary one day and sigh and stretch its limbs and find us too hard, and would like to have things better, easier, more tender, like an agreeable vice—let us remain *hard*, we last Stoicks! And let us dispatch to her assistance whatever we have in us of devilry: our disgust with what is clumsy and approximate, our *nitimus in vetitum*⁷⁵ our adventurous courage, our seasoned and choosy curiosity, our subtlest, most disguised, most spiritual will to power and overcoming of the world that flies and flutters covetously around all the realms of the future—let us come to the assistance of our "god" with all our "devils"! It is probable that we shall be misunderstood and mistaken for others on this account:

what matter? And even if they were right! Have not all gods so far been such devils who have become holy and been rebaptized, making themselves hermits? And what ultimately do we know of ourselves? And how the spirit that leads us would like to be *called*? (It is a matter of names.) And how many spirits we harbor? Our honesty, we free spirits—let us see to it that it does not become our vanity, our finery and pomp, our limit, our stupidity.⁷⁶

76. Europe is sick but owes the utmost gratitude to her incurability and to the eternal changes in her affliction: these constantly new conditions and these no less constantly renewed dangers, pains, and resources have finally generated an intellectual irritability that almost amounts to genius and is in any case the mother of all genius.⁷⁷

77. A philosophy that does not make us happier, more virtuous; that, on the contrary, lets it be understood that one will very likely perish in its service; that one will be isolated from one's times, burned, and scalded; that one will have to pass through every kind of contempt and hate; that one will need a great deal of hardness toward oneself and unfortunately also toward others; such a philosophy does not easily insinuate itself near someone, one must be *born* for it.⁷⁸

78. The fight against Plato, or, to speak more clearly and for “the people,” the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia—for Christianity is Platonism for “the people”—has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which had never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals.⁷⁹

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79. My hand is the hand of a madman: beware, all tables and walls and whatever else still offers room for the frills, the scribbling skills of madmen.⁸⁰

80. I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus; I should prefer to be even a satyr to being a saint.⁸¹

81. I myself, having made this tragedy of tragedies all by myself, insofar as it is finished—having first tied the knot of morality into existence before I drew it so tight that only a god could untie it (which is what Horace demands)—I myself have now slain all gods in the fourth act, for the sake of morality. Now, what is to become of the fifth act? From where

am I to take the tragic solution?—Should I begin to think about a comic solution?⁸²

82. . . . we are prepared like no previous age for a carnival in the grand style, for the laughter and high spirits of the most spiritual revelry, for the transcendental heights of the highest insanity and Aristophanean derision of the world. Perhaps this is where we shall still discover the realm of our *creative genius*, that realm in which we, too, can still be original, say, as parodists of world history and God's buffoons—perhaps, even if nothing else today has any future, our *laughter* may yet have a future!⁸³

83. “The hero is joyful”: this has escaped the authors of tragedies up until the present.⁸⁴

84. And how many new *ideals* are, at bottom, still possible!—Here is a little ideal I stumble upon once every five weeks on a wild and lonely walk, in an azure moment of sinful happiness. To spend one’s life amid delicate and absurd things; a stranger to reality; half an artist, half a bird and metaphysician; with no care for reality, except now and then to acknowledge it in the manner of a good dancer with the tips of one’s toes; always tickled by some sun ray of happiness; exuberant and encouraged even by misery—for misery *preserves* the happy man; fixing a little humorous tail even to the holiest of things: this, as is obvious, is the ideal of a heavy, hundredweight spirit—a *spirit of gravity*.⁸⁵

85. On the misunderstanding of “cheerfulness.” Temporary relief from a protracted tension; the high spirits, the saturnalia of a spirit that is dedicating and preparing itself for protracted and terrible decisions. The “madman” in the form of science.⁸⁶

86. I should account as the foremost musician one who knew only the sadness of the most profound happiness, and no other sadness at all; but such a musician has never existed yet.⁸⁷

87. With a touching simplicity, Russian music expresses the soul of the *moujik*, of the low people. Nothing speaks more deeply to the heart than these joyful melodies that are of an absolute sadness.⁸⁸

88. From time to time we need to be separated from ourselves to gaze upon ourselves from above, and, from an artistic distance, to laugh and

cry *over* ourselves. We must discover the *hero* no less than the *fool* in our passion for knowledge; we must occasionally find pleasure in our folly or we cannot continue to find pleasure in our wisdom. Precisely because we are at bottom grave and serious human beings—really, more weights than human beings—nothing does us as much good as a *fool's hat*: we need it in relation to ourselves—we need all exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish, and blissful art lest we lose the *freedom* above things that our ideal demands of us. It would mean a *regression* for us, with our irritable honesty, to get involved entirely in morality and, for the sake of the excessive demands that we make on ourselves in these matters, to become virtuous monsters and scarecrows. We should be *able* also to stand *above* morality—and not only to *stand* with the anxious stiffness of a man who is afraid of slipping and falling at any moment, but also to *float* above it and *play*. How then could we possibly dispense with art—and with the fool?—And as long as you are in any way *ashamed* before yourselves, you do not yet belong with us.⁸⁹

89. All people who have depth find happiness in being for once like flying fish, playing on the peaks of waves; what they consider best in this is that they have a surface: their skin-coveredness—*sit venia verbo*.⁹⁰

90. There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness.⁹¹

91. We won't let ourselves lose the advantages that there are in not knowing much and living in a little corner of the universe. Man has the right to be foolish, he also has the right to feel he is God, it's only one possibility among so many others.⁹²

92. . . . to love and honor oneself in one's own wisdom, and even *absurdity*; to be part buffoon, part god; neither a figure of renunciation nor an owl; neither a serpent . . .⁹³

93. To the surprise of Talleyrand, *Napoleon* could bark and thunder his anger at the chosen moment, then reduce it just as quickly to silence; in this way the energetic man must treat his furious dogs; so violent may be in him the will to understand (and it's his most undisciplined dogma), he must know how to incarnate at the right moment even the will not to know the truth, the will to remain in uncertainty, in ignorance, and, above all, in the folly that pleases him.⁹⁴

94. Pain too is a joy; curses too are a blessing; night too is a sun—go away or you will learn: a sage too is a fool.⁹⁵

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95. Your graciousness and overgraciousness do not want to lament and weep; and yet, O my soul, your smile longs for tears and your trembling mouth for sobs.⁹⁶

96. The spell that fights on our behalf, the eye of Venus that charms and blinds even our opponents, are the *magic of the extreme*, the seduction of everything excessive: we immoralists—we are the most excessive.⁹⁷

97. What shall I do with these two young men! cried a disgruntled philosopher who “corrupted” youth as Socrates had once done; they are unwelcome students. One cannot say “No,” and the other always says yes and no. Assuming that they adopted my doctrine, the former would *suffer* too much, for my way of thinking requires a warlike soul, a will to injure, a delight in saying no, a hard skin; he would slowly die of external and internal wounds. And the other one would make some personal compromise with every cause he represents and thus compromise it; such a disciple I wish my enemy.⁹⁸

98. In the man there is more of the child than in the youth, and less melancholy: he knows better how to die and to live.⁹⁹

99. The air thin and pure, danger near, and the spirit full of joyous sarcasm: these go well together.¹⁰⁰

100. Have you ever said yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said yes too to *all* pain. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored.¹⁰¹

101. That all that is heavy and grave should become light; all that is body, dancer; all that is spirit, bird—and verily, that is my alpha and omega.¹⁰²

102. Where will we find ourselves, solitaires among solitaires—for it's there that we *will* certainly be someday, through the effect of science—where will we find a companion for man? Once we sought a King, a Father, a Judge for ourselves, because we lacked real kings, fathers, judges. Later it will be a *Friend* we *will seek*—men will be magnificent and autonomous solar

systems, but they will be *alone*. The mythological instinct will then be in search of a Friend.¹⁰³

103. I want to have my lion and eagle near me so that I always have hints and omens that help me to know if my strength increases or declines.¹⁰⁴

104. *What does your conscience say?*—You shall become who you are.¹⁰⁵

105. For what does one have to atone most? For one's modesty; for having failed to listen to one's most personal requirements; for having mistaken oneself; for having underestimated oneself; for having lost a good ear for one's instincts: this lack of reverence for oneself revenges itself through every kind of deprivation: health, friendship, well-being, pride, cheerfulness, freedom, firmness, courage. One never forgives oneself afterward for this lack of genuine egoism: one takes it for an objection, for a doubt about a real self.¹⁰⁶

106. My tongue is of the people: I speak too warmly and too brutally for Angora rabbits. And my speech sounds even stranger to all ink-fish and pen-hacks.¹⁰⁷

107. The blindness of the blind and their seeking and groping shall yet bear witness to the power of the sun, into which they have looked . . .¹⁰⁸

108. . . . audacious spirit, explorer who has once already strayed into all the labyrinths of the future.¹⁰⁹

109. . . . there can be no doubt that man is more changeable, uncertain, inconsistent than any other animal—he is *the sick animal*: how has this come about? Certainly he has also dared more, done more new things, braved more and challenged fate more than all the other animals put together: he, the great experimenter with himself, discontented and insatiable, wrestling with animals, nature and gods for ultimate dominion—he, still unvanquished, eternally directed toward the future, whose own restless energies never leave him in peace, so that his future digs like a spur into the flesh of every present—how should such a courageous and richly endowed animal not also be the most imperiled, the most chronically and profoundly sick of all sick animals?¹¹⁰

110. Under peaceful conditions, a warlike man sets upon himself.¹¹¹

111. Perhaps I know better than anyone why man is the only being who knows how to laugh; he alone suffers profoundly from having been *constrained* to invent laughter. The unhappiest, the most melancholic of all the animals is, as is just, the most gay.¹¹²

112. I forgot to say that such philosophers are cheerful and that they like to sit in the abyss below a perfectly clear sky: they need different means from other men for enduring life; for they suffer differently (namely as much from the profundity of their contempt for man as from their love for man).—The most suffering animal on earth invented for itself—laughter.¹¹³

113. O my soul, I taught you the contempt that does not come like the worm's gnawing; the great, the loving contempt that loves most where it despises most.¹¹⁴

114. Hungry, violent, lonely, godless: thus the will of the lion wants itself.¹¹⁵

115. O my soul, I washed the little bashfulness and the nook-virtue off you and persuaded you to stand naked before the eyes of the sun.¹¹⁶

116. For some, life turns out badly: a poisonous worm eats its way to their heart. Let them see to it that their dying turns out that much better.¹¹⁷

117. Everyone considers dying important; but as yet death is no festival. As yet men have not learned how one hallows the most beautiful festivals.¹¹⁸

118. I ask you, sirs, what does your virtue matter to us? Should we step aside to become philosophers, rhinoceroses, cave bears, ghosts? Is not the point for us to *unburden* ourselves of virtue and happiness? We are by nature much too happy, much too virtuous for us not to experience a little temptation to become philosophers, which is to say immoralists and adventurers.¹¹⁹

119. Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the terrible seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been misplaced and very awkward methods of winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won.¹²⁰

120. Brave is he who knows fear and looks into the abyss with pride.¹²¹

121. A philosopher: a human being who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, and dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his own thoughts as from outside, as from above and below, as by *his* type of experiences and lightning bolts; who is perhaps himself a storm pregnant with new lightning; a fatal human being around whom there are constant rumblings and growlings, crevices, and uncanny doings. A philosopher—alas, a being that often runs away from itself, often is afraid of itself—but too inquisitive not to always, again “return to himself.”¹²²

122. Nothing but questions of strength: how far to prevail against the conditions that preserve society? How far to unchain one’s terrible qualities through which most people perish? How far to oppose truth and reflect on its most questionable sides? How far to oppose suffering, self-contempt, pity, sickness, vice, with the query as to whether one cannot become master of them? (What does not destroy us makes us stronger!¹²³)—Finally: how far to acknowledge in one’s mind the rule, the commonplace, the petty, good, upright, the average nature, without letting oneself be vulgarized by them?¹²⁴

123. A voluntary obscurity perhaps, an avoidance of oneself, a dislike of noise, honor, newspapers, influence, a modest job, an everyday job, something that conceals rather than exposes one, an occasional association with harmless, cheerful beasts and birds whose sight is refreshing, mountains for company, but not dead ones, mountains with *eyes* (that is, with lakes), perhaps even a room in a full utterly commonplace hotel, where one is certain to go unrecognized and can talk to anyone with impunity—that is what “desert” means here.¹²⁵

124. What is best belongs to my kind and to me; and when one does not give it to us, we take it: the best food, the purest sky, the strongest thoughts, the most beautiful women!¹²⁶

125. Having escaped again and again from the musty agreeable nooks into which preference and prejudice, youth, origin, the accidents of people and books or even exhaustion from wandering seemed to have banished us; full of malice against the lures of dependence that lie hidden in honors, or money, or offices, or enthusiasms of the senses; grateful even to need and vacillating sickness because they always rid us from some rule and its

"prejudice," grateful to God, devil, sheep, and worm in us; curious about vice, investigators to the point of cruelty, with uninhibited fingers for the unfathomable, with teeth and stomachs for the most indigestible, ready for everyfeat that requires a sense of acuteness and acute senses, ready for every venture, thanks to an excess of "free judgment," with fore- and back-souls into whose ultimate intentions nobody can look so easily, with fore- and backgrounds that no foot is likely to explore to the end; concealed under cloaks of light, conquerors even if we look like heirs and prodigals, arrangers and collectors from morning till late, misers of our riches and our crammed drawers, economical in learning and forgetting, inventive in schemas, occasionally proud of tables of categories, occasionally pedants, occasionally night owls of work even in broad daylight; yes, when it is necessary even scarecrows—and today it is necessary; namely, insofar as we are born, sworn, jealous friends of solitude, of our own most profound sadness, at midnight and midday: that is the type of man we are, we free spirits!¹²⁷

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126. Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit, being the teacher of *the great suspicion* that turns every U into an X, a real, genuine X, that is the letter before the penultimate one. . . . Only great pain, the long, slow pain that takes its time—on which we are burned, as it were, with green wood—compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths and to put aside all trust, everything good-natured, everything that would interpose a veil, that is mild, that is medium—things in which formerly we may have found our "humanity." I doubt that such pain makes us "better"; but I know that it makes us more *profound*.¹²⁸

127. You want, if possible—and there is no more insane "if possible"—*to abolish suffering*. And we? It really seems that *we* would rather have it higher and worse than ever. Well-being as you understand it—that is no goal, that seems to us an *end*, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible—that makes his destruction *desirable*. The discipline of suffering, of *great suffering*—do you not know that only *this* discipline has created all enhancements of man so far? That tension of the soul in unhappiness that cultivates its strength, it shudders face to face with great ruin, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, persevering, interpreting, and exploiting suffering, and whatever has been granted to it of profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness—was it not granted to it through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?¹²⁹

128. To have a refined sensibility and taste, to be habituated to what is best and rarest, as to one's true natural nourishment, to enjoy a robust and bold body, fated to be the guardian and the support, what's more, the instrument of a still more robust, bolder spirit, loving danger even more: who would not want to possess such a good, to live in such a state! But make no mistake: with such a lot, in such a state, one is the being under the sun *most suited to suffering*, and only at this price does one acquire the rare distinction of also being *most suited to happiness under the sun!* Only on the condition of remaining always open in every way and permeable to one's depths to pain can one open oneself to the most delicate varieties and the greatest heights of happiness, for then one is the most sensitive organ, the most irritable, the most healthy, the most variable, and the most enduring in joy and all the refined raptures of the spirit and the senses: provided however that the gods take one under their protection rather than making one (as too often) the lightning rod of their jealousy and their mockery of men.¹³⁰

129. What gave things their meaning, their value, the signification? The inventive heart, swollen with desire, and created by this desire. It created *pleasure and pain*. It also wanted to satisfy itself with pain. We must have agreed to take on all the pain that has ever been suffered, that of man and of the animals, and to set for ourselves a goal *that will give that pain a reason.*¹³¹

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130. We are the integral part of the character of the universe, undoubtedly! We only have access to the universe through ourselves; all that we carry within ourselves, high and low, must be understood as an integral part and by nature necessary.¹³²

131. *Great Cosmic Discourse*: "I am cruelty, I am trickery," etc., etc. To mock the fear of assuming responsibility for a fault (mockery of the creator) and for all suffering.—It's more malicious than ever, etc.—Superior form of contentment in his own work: he shatters it in order to rebuild it without weariness. New triumph over death: annihilation.¹³³

132. Once man has been *perfectly identified with humanity, he silences nature completely.*¹³⁴

133. One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.¹³⁵

134. Those thinkers in whom all stars move in cyclic orbits are not the most profound. Whoever looks into himself as into vast space and carries galaxies in himself also knows how irregular all galaxies are; they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence.¹³⁶

135. Born on the earth, I experience the illnesses of the sun as an obscuring of myself and a flood in my own soul.¹³⁷

136. Man seeks the image of the universe in the philosophy that gives it the greatest impression of freedom, which is to say in which his most powerful instinct feels free in its activity. That it should be the same for me!¹³⁸

137. As long as you still experience the stars as something “above you,” you lack the eye of one who seeks knowledge.¹³⁹

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138. I wander among men as among the fragments and limbs of men.

This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field.

And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings.¹⁴⁰

139. Our society of today is only a simulacrum of culture; the cultured man is *lacking*. The great *synthetic man* is lacking, in whom the various forces are unhesitatingly harnessed for the attainment of one goal. What we possess is the multifarious man, perhaps the most interesting chaos there has ever been, not the chaos *before* the creation of a world, but that after—Goethe as the most beautiful expression of the type (absolutely not an Olympian!).¹⁴¹

140. And even now the time seems remote when artistic energies and the practical wisdom of life will join with scientific thinking to form a higher organic system in relation to which scholars, physicians, artists, and legislators—as we know them at present—would have to look like paltry relics of ancient times.¹⁴²

141. A: You keep spoiling the taste; that is what everybody says.

B: Certainly. I spoil the taste of his party for everyone—and no party forgives that.¹⁴³

142. Develop all of our faculties—that means: develop anarchy! Perish!¹⁴⁴

143. Anyone who manages to experience the history of humanity as a whole as *his own history* will feel in an enormously generalized way all the grief of an invalid who thinks of health, of an old man who thinks of the dreams of his youth, of a lover deprived of his beloved, of the martyr whose ideal is perishing, of the hero on the evening after a battle that has decided nothing but brought him wounds and the loss of his friend. But if one endured, if one *could* endure this immense sum of grief of all kinds while yet being the hero who, as the second day of battle breaks, welcomes the dawn and his fortune, being a person whose horizon encompasses thousands of years past and future, being the heir of all the nobility of all past spirit—an heir with a sense of obligation, the most aristocratic of old nobles and at the same time the first of a new nobility—the likes of which no age has yet seen or dreamed of; if one could burden one's soul with all of this—the oldest, the newest, losses, hopes, conquests, and the victories of humanity; if one could finally contain all this in one soul and crowd it into a single feeling—this would surely have to result in a happiness that humanity has not known so far: the happiness of a god full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness that, like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into the sea, feeling richest, as the sun does, only when even the poorest fisherman is still rowing with golden oars! This godlike feeling would then be called—humaneness.¹⁴⁵

144. The greatest distinction that fate can bestow on us is to let us fight for a time on the side of our opponents. With that we are *predestined* for a great victory.¹⁴⁶

145. All creation is communion. Thinker, creator, lover are *one*.¹⁴⁷

146. Do you want to become a universal and equitable gaze? You could only do so after having passed through a great number of individualities, of such a kind that your last individuality would need all the others as a function of itself.¹⁴⁸

147. “For the first time I have brought together in myself the just, the hero, the poet, the scholar, the fortune-teller, the leader: I’ve extended my arch above the people, I’ve erected columns upon which the sky rests—strong enough to carry the sky.” (This is how the overman will speak.)¹⁴⁹

148. Affected by themselves as by an illness, thus all talents appeared to me.¹⁵⁰

149. Sharp and mild, rough and fine,
Strange and familiar, impure and clean,
All this I am and wish to mean,
Dove as well as snake and swine.¹⁵¹

150. Every great man is necessarily a skeptic (which is not to say that he has to appear to be one), provided that greatness consists in this: to *will* something great and the means to it. Freedom from any kind of conviction is part of the strength of his will.¹⁵²

151. . . . “freedom of spirit,” which is to say disbelief as an instinct . . .¹⁵³

152. The zealous continue for a cause that was best, betrayed, like all that rests on an absolute faith, an absolute lack of intellectual aristocracy, that of which the sign is always—the coldness of the gaze.¹⁵⁴

153. *We create our enemies:* we *need* them because of our ideal! To transform into gods the enemies worthy of us and thereby to raise ourselves up and transform ourselves!¹⁵⁵

154. The highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant “man” shows himself strongest, one finds instincts that conflict powerfully (e.g., Shakespeare), but are controlled.¹⁵⁶

155. From heroic grandeur, the only possible state for precursors. (Effort toward the absolute disaster, the only means of bearing it.)

We don’t have the right to desire a single state, we must desire to *become periodic beings*—like existence.¹⁵⁷

156. Whoever has a soul that craves to have experienced the whole range of values and desiderata to date, and to have sailed around all the coasts of this ideal “Mediterranean”; whoever wants to know from the adventures of his own most authentic experience how a discoverer and conqueror of the ideal feels, and also an artist, a saint, a legislator, a sage, a scholar, a pious man, a soothsayer, and one who stands divinely apart in the old style—needs one thing above everything else: the *great health*—that one does not merely have

but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up. And now, after we have long been on our way in this manner, we Argonauts of the ideal, with more daring perhaps than is prudent, and have suffered shipwreck and damage often enough, but are, to repeat it, healthier than one likes to permit us, dangerously healthy, ever again healthy—it will seem to us as if, as a reward, we now confronted an as yet undiscovered country whose boundaries nobody has surveyed yet, something beyond all the lands and nooks of the ideal so far, a world so exuberant in what is beautiful, strange, questionable, terrible, and divine that our curiosity as well as our craving to possess it has got beside itself—alas, now nothing will sate us any more! After such vistas and with such a burning hunger in our conscience and science, how could we still be satisfied with *present-day man?*¹⁵⁸

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157. The moral earth, too, is round. The moral earth, too, has its antipodes. The antipodes, too, have the right to exist. There is yet another world to be discovered—and more than one. Embark, philosophers!¹⁵⁹

158. The coast has vanished, now the last chain has fallen from me; the boundless roars around me, far out glisten space and time; be of good cheer, old heart!¹⁶⁰

159. We who think and feel at the same time are those who really continually *fashion* something that had not been there before: the whole eternally growing world of valuations, colors, accents, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations. This poem that we have invented is continually studied by the so-called practical human beings (our actors) who learn their roles and translate everything into flesh and actuality, into the everyday. Whatever has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some time, as a present—and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it. Only we have created the world *that created man!*—But precisely this knowledge we lack, and when we occasionally catch it for a fleeting moment we always forget it again immediately; we fail to recognize our best power and underestimate ourselves, the contemplatives, just a little. We are *neither as proud nor as happy* as we might be.¹⁶¹

160. How much is still possible? Learn to laugh at yourselves as one must laugh!¹⁶²

161. The earth is a gaming table for the gods and trembles with creative new words and the dice throws of the gods.¹⁶³

162. Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values does the world revolve; it revolves in *silence*.¹⁶⁴

163. It is the stillest words that bring on the storm. Thoughts that come on doves' feet guide the world.¹⁶⁵

164. There are a thousand paths that have never yet been trodden—a thousand healths and hidden isles of life. Even now, man and man's earth are unexhausted and undiscovered.¹⁶⁶

165. I love all those who are as heavy drops, falling one by one out of the dark cloud that hangs over men: they herald the advent of lightning, and, as heralds, they perish.

Behold, I am a herald of the lightning and a heavy drop from the cloud; but this lightning is called *overman*.¹⁶⁷

166. Since there is no longer God, solitude has become intolerable; a higher man is required to set it to work.¹⁶⁸

167. When one no longer finds God great, one no longer finds God anywhere; God must be denied or created.¹⁶⁹

168. Even in knowledge I feel only my will's joy in begetting and becoming; and if there is innocence in my knowledge, it is because the will to beget is in it.

Away from God and gods this will has lured me; what would be left to create if gods existed?¹⁷⁰

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169. Am I understood? — The self-overcoming of morality, out of truthfulness.¹⁷¹

170. We would like to be the *inheritors* of all ancient morality and not begin again. All our activity is only moral when it turns against its ancient form.¹⁷²

171. To disavow merit: but to do that which is above all praise, indeed above all understanding.¹⁷³

172. To what extent is the destruction of morality by itself still a proof of its own strength? We other Europeans, we have in us the blood of those who died for their faith, we have taken morality terribly seriously; there is nothing that we have not sacrificed to it. What's more, we owe our intellectual refinement principally to the vivisection of consciences. We still don't know the directions in which we will be pushed once we have left our ancient territory. But this soil itself has brought us the strength that now pushes us on distant adventures, toward countries without borders, which have not yet been discovered or exploited; we have no choice, we must be conquerors since we no longer have a country in which we feel at home, where we wish to "stay." A hidden *affirmation* pushes us, an affirmation stronger than all our negations. Our strength itself does not permit us to remain on this ancient and decomposed soil; we'll risk the departure, we'll put ourselves at risk; the world is still rich and unknown and it would be better to perish than to become weak and venomous. Our vigor itself pushes us toward the high seas, toward the point where all suns up to now have set; we *know* that there is a new world.¹⁷⁴

173. In order to obey morality, someone no longer eats a dish; just as, one day, in order to obey morality, one will end up by no longer "doing good."¹⁷⁵

174. The last thing *I* should promise would be to "improve" mankind.¹⁷⁶

175. Will liberates: that is the true teaching in matters of will and liberty.¹⁷⁷

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176. I will tell you of the three metamorphoses of the spirit: how the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child.

There is much that is difficult for the spirit, the strong reverent spirit that would bear much: but the difficult and the most difficult are what its strength demands.

What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded.

What is most difficult, O heroes, asks the spirit that would bear much, that I may take it upon myself and rejoice in my strength?

Is it not humbling oneself to wound one's haughtiness? Letting one's folly shine to mock one's wisdom?

Or is it this: parting from our cause when it triumphs? Climbing high mountains to tempt the tempter?

Or is it this: feeding on the acorns and grass of knowledge and, for the sake of truth, suffering hunger in one's soul?

Or is it this: being sick and sending home the comforters and making friends with the deaf, who never hear what you want?

Or is it this: stepping into filthy waters when they are the waters of truth and not repulsing cold frogs and hot toads?

Or is it this: loving those who despise us and offering a hand to the ghost that would frighten us?

All these most difficult things the spirit that would bear much takes upon itself: like the camel that, burdened, speeds into the desert, thus the spirit speeds into the desert.

In the loneliest desert, however, the second metamorphosis occurs: here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert. Here he seeks out his last master: he wants to fight him and his last god; for ultimate victory he wants to fight with the great dragon.

Who is the great dragon whom the spirit will no longer call lord and god? "You must" is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says, "I will." "You must" lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales; and on every scale shines a golden "You must."

Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: "All value of all things shines on me. All value has long been created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more 'I will.'" Thus speaks the dragon.

My brothers, why is there a need in the spirit for the lion? Why is not the beast of burden, which renounces and is reverent, enough?

To create new values—that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation—that is within the power of the lion.

The creation of freedom, to oppose even duty with a sacred "No"—for that, my brothers, the lion is necessary.

To assume the right to new values—that is the most terrifying assumption for a reverent spirit that would bear much. Verily, to him it is preying, and a matter for a beast of prey.

He once loved "You must," it was the most sacred thing for him. Now he must find emptiness even in the most sacred things; freedom from his love may become his prey: the lion is needed for such prey.

But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become a child?

The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes."

For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred “Yes” is needed . . .¹⁷⁸

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177. But the genuine philosopher—as it seems to *us*, my friends?—lives “unphilosophically” and unwisely above all *unreasonably*, and feels the burden and the duty of a thousand attempts and temptations of life—he risks himself ceaselessly, he plays the wicked game . . .¹⁷⁹

178. Theory of *chance*. The soul, a selective and self-nourishing entity, extremely shrewd and *perpetually* creative (this *creative* force is usually overlooked!) is conceived only as “passive.”

To recognize the *active force*, the creative force among the contingencies: chance itself is only the *clash of creative impulses*.¹⁸⁰

179. Consolation for those who *sink!* Consider their passions a bad number in the lottery. Understand that most of the throws must fail, that loss is *as useful* as success. No *remorse*, cut it short with suicide.¹⁸¹

180. One kind of man will risk nothing, another wants risks. Are we others contemptuous of life? On the contrary, we instinctively seek life raised to a higher power, life lived in danger—But that, to repeat it, does not mean we want to be more virtuous than others. Pascal, for example, wanted to risk nothing: he remained a Christian: perhaps that was virtuous?¹⁸²

181. In that I consider the world as a divine game beyond good and evil, I have as precursors the philosophy of the Vedanta and Heraclitus.¹⁸³

182. A real man wants two things: danger and play. Therefore he wants woman as the most dangerous plaything.¹⁸⁴

183. That one stakes one’s life, one’s health, one’s honor, is the consequence of temerity and an overflowing, prodigal will: not from love of man but because every great danger challenges our curiosity about the degree of our strength and our courage.¹⁸⁵

184. We are not thinking frogs, nor objectifying and registering mechanisms with their innards removed: ceaselessly we have to give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and, maternally, endow them with all we have of blood, heart, fire, joy, passion, torment, conscience, and fate.¹⁸⁶

185. So as to be the newly born child, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth giver.¹⁸⁷

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186. I sat down by their great tomb road among cadavers and vultures, and I laughed at all their past and its rotting, decaying magnificence.¹⁸⁸

187. How could I consent to live, if I did not see *in advance* the future beyond you.¹⁸⁹

188. O my soul, I gave you back the freedom over the created and the uncreated; and who knows, as you know, the voluptuous delight of the future?¹⁹⁰

189. I've gone back to the origins: thus I have become a stranger to all cults, everything around me has become foreign and deserted.

But what inclines in me to adoration has secretly germinated, a tree emerged outside of me, and I sat down in its shadow: it is the tree of the future.¹⁹¹

190. The ex-priest and the released criminal keep making faces: what they desire is a face without a past.—But have you ever seen people who know that their faces reflect the future and who are so polite to you—you of the “present times”—that they make a face without future?¹⁹²

191. Humanity has an immense history before it, how could it ask for an ideal from sometime in the past? Perhaps, all the same, if one compares it with the *present*, which is perhaps a depression.¹⁹³

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192. The desire for “happiness” characterizes partially or totally “untimely,” impotent men; the others don’t dream of “happiness,” their strength seeks to *be spent*.¹⁹⁴

193. Neither women nor geniuses work. Up till now, women have been the highest luxury of humanity. Every moment in which we produce the best of ourselves, we aren’t working. Work is only a means of attaining these moments.¹⁹⁵

194. The most industrious of ages—ours—does not know how to make anything of all its industriousness and money, except always still more money and still more industriousness; for it requires more genius to spend than to acquire.¹⁹⁶

195. Type: True graciousness, nobility, greatness of soul proceed from abundance; do not give in order to receive—do not try to exalt themselves by being gracious;—prodigality as the type of true graciousness, abundance of personality as its presupposition.¹⁹⁷

196. The goal is not happiness, it is the sensation of power. There is in man and in humanity an immense strength that wants to be *spent*, to create: it is a chain of continuous explosions that in no way has happiness as its goal.¹⁹⁸

197. The happiness of the spirit is this: to be anointed and consecrated through tears as a sacrifice.¹⁹⁹

198. War on the effeminate conception of “*aristocratic distinction*”! A quantum more of brutality cannot be dispensed with, any more than closeness to crime. Even “self-satisfaction” is *not* part of it; one should be adventurous, experimental, destructive also toward oneself.²⁰⁰

199. Why do I speak of sacrifice? I squander what is given to me, I—a squanderer with a thousand hands; how could I still call that sacrificing?²⁰¹

200. This is your thirst: to become sacrifices and gifts yourselves; and that is why you thirst to pile up all the riches in your soul.

Your desire for treasures is insatiable because your desire to give your virtue is insatiable.

You force all things to and into yourself that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love.²⁰²

201. But tell me: how did gold attain the highest value? Because it is uncommon and useless and gleaming and gentle in its splendor; it is always a gift.²⁰³

202. The highest virtue is uncommon and useless; it is gleaming and gentle in its splendor: a gift giving virtue is the highest virtue.²⁰⁴

203. I love the one whose soul squanders itself, who wants no thanks and returns none: for he always gives away and does not want to preserve himself.²⁰⁵

204. As yet he does not have the poverty of the rich who have already counted all their treasures once; he is squandering his spirit with the unreason of squandering nature.²⁰⁶

205. I give no alms. I am not poor enough for that.²⁰⁷

206. I would give away and distribute, until the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches.²⁰⁸

207. I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it.²⁰⁹

III.

Politics

It is a strange paradox: if one perceives the profound absence of escape, the profound absence of goal and meaning, then—but only then—the mind liberated, we approach practically, lucidly, practical problems.

Nietzsche himself experienced luminous anticipations (only a hasty—motivated—reading confuses fragmentary aspects of this with the Nazi spirit).

In order to interpret, in a DECISIVE, practical manner Nietzsche's "political" ideas, I introduce the following principles:

1. *It is no longer a question of meeting the failure of authority: IT IS A QUESTION, more modestly, OF REPLACING GOD. The death of God poses the problem of human sovereignty on the spiritual level: moral freedom, the sovereignty of the moral being are in question, not the possession of material wealth.*

2. *In any case, this sovereignty is clearly distinguished from political power: it can (and undoubtedly even must) be misunderstood, submit to incessant difficulties; to go better, sovereign men are distinct from dominators.*

3. *The distance of these sovereign men from the masses can—in my sense must—have nothing in common with the political differences separating the classes during the feudal era. Moral freedom gains (IT GAINS FREEDOM) through effacement, reduction, deep immanence. This in opposition to Nietzsche's insistence and his useless concern for new political authorities.*

4. *The past is the object of a radical hatred. No authority, no superiority deriving from birth or money can be defended: nothing valuable rests on them; they are condemned without recourse. The principle of an intellectual aristocracy of the same nature as that of the Church can only be evoked.*

5. *According to vague but sufficient indications from Nietzsche, the place in society of these sovereign men, in the two independent senses of the power of the State, is that of the secret societies (archaic or not) and of Churches. I can imagine*

a community formed as loosely as one wants, even formless: the only condition is that an experience of moral freedom exist in common, not be reduced to flat signification, canceling itself out, denying its particular freedom.

6. I think that complete moral freedom is the only guarantee, the key, to political freedom. And even: that only a “free spirit” could pose economic problems with sufficient reason, bringing human solutions to them, with the GOOD CONSCIENCE, THE INNOCENCE that this assumes. Every man with the slightest freedom supports the freedom of others in danger because he subordinates the solution of material difficulties to his moral chains.

*

208. An experiment, a risk appeared to me to be in all commanding; and whenever the living commands, it risks itself.

Indeed, even when it commands itself, it still must expiate its commanding. It must become the judge, the avenger, and the victim of its own law.²¹⁰

209. My enemies have grown powerful and have distorted my teaching till those dearest to me must be ashamed of the gifts I gave them.

I have lost my friends; the hour has come to seek those I have lost.²¹¹

210. I love him who is ashamed when the dice fall for him, and asks, “Have I cheated?” For he wants to perish.²¹²

211. I love him whose soul is overfull so that he forgets himself, and all things are in him; thus all things spell his going under.²¹³

212. Our path goes toward the heights, from one possibility to another more elevated one. But the degenerated sense, which says, “Everything for me,” is for us only a horror.²¹⁴

*

213. The desire for destruction, change, becoming *can* be the expression of an overfull power pregnant with the future (my term for this, as is known, is the word “Dionysian”); but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, underprivileged, which destroys, *has* to destroy, because what exists, indeed existence itself, rebels and provokes it.²¹⁵

214. A new nobility is needed to be the adversary of all rabble and of all that is despotic.²¹⁶

215. What is noble? That one constantly has to play a part. That one seeks situations in which one has constant need of poses. That one leaves happiness to the great majority: happiness as peace of soul, virtue, comfort, Anglo-angelic shopkeeperdom à la Spencer. That one instinctively seeks heavy responsibilities. That one knows how to make enemies everywhere, if the worst comes to the worst even of oneself.²¹⁷

216. The ancient morality had its limits within a species; all ancient moralities served *in the first place* to give a kind of absolute stability: once that was obtained, a higher end could be pursued.

The first of these movements is absolute: leveling of humanity, huge anthills, etc.

The other movement, my movement, is on the contrary the aggravation of every contrast and every ditch, the suppression of equality, the creation of the All-powerful.

The ancient morality produced the last man, my movement the overman. The goal is not that these last should be considered as the masters of the first; the two species must exist beside one another, separated as much as possible: the one, similar to the *gods of the Epicureans, not concerned with the other in any way*.²¹⁸

217. The *necessity* of showing that as the consumption of man and mankind becomes more and more economical and the “machinery” of interests and services is integrated ever more intricately, a counter-movement is inevitable. I designate this as the *secretion of a luxury surplus of mankind*: it aims to bring to light a *stronger species*, a higher type that arises and preserves itself under different conditions from those of the average man. My concept, my *symbol* for this type is, as one knows, the word “overman.”

On that first road that can now be completely surveyed arise adaptation, leveling, higher Chinadom, modesty in the instincts, satisfaction in the dwarfing of mankind—a kind of stagnating level of mankind. Once we possess that common economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of this economy—as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly “adapted” gears; as an ever-growing superfluity of all-dominating and commanding elements; as a

whole of tremendous force, whose individual factors represent minimal forces, minimal values.

In opposition to this dwarfing and adaptation of man to a specialized utility, a reverse movement is needed—the production of a *synthetic, totalizing, justifying* man for whose existence this transformation of mankind into a machine is a precondition, as a base on which he can invent his higher form of being.

He needs the opposition of the masses, of the “leveled,” a feeling of distance from them! He stands on them; he lives off them. This higher form of aristocracy is that of the future.—Morally speaking, this overall machinery, this solidarity of all gears, represents a maximum in the exploitation of man; but it presupposes those on whose account this exploitation has meaning. Otherwise it would really be nothing but an overall diminution, a devaluation of the type man—a regressive phenomenon in the grand style.

It is clear, what I combat is *economic* optimism: as if the increasing expenditure of everybody must necessarily involve the increasing welfare of everybody. The opposite seems to me to be the case: *expenditure of everybody amounts to a collective loss*; man *declines*—so one no longer knows what aim this tremendous evolution has served. An aim? A new aim?—that is what humanity needs.²¹⁹

218. The highest men live beyond the rulers, freed from all bonds; and in the rulers they have their instruments.²²⁰

219. Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority—where he may forget “men who are the rule,” being their exception.²²¹

220. The workers shall live one day as the bourgeois do now—but *above* them, distinguished by their freedom from wants, the *higher caste*: that is to say, poorer and simpler, but in possession of power.²²²

221. The degree of resistance that must be continually overcome in order to remain on top is the measure of freedom, whether for individuals or for societies—freedom understood, that is, as positive power. According to this concept, the highest form of individual freedom, of sovereignty, would in all probability emerge not five steps from its opposite, where the danger of slavery hangs over existence like a hundred swords of Damocles. Look at history from this viewpoint: the ages in which the “individual” achieves such ripe perfection, i.e., *freedom*, and the classic type of the *sovereign man* is attained—oh no! they have never been humane ages!²²³

222. Zarathustra is happy that the class struggle should have passed and the time should finally have come for a hierarchy of individuals. The hatred of the democratic system of leveling is only a first step; in reality, Zarathustra is very happy that it has come to this. Now he can fulfill his task.

Up till now, his teachings have only addressed that future caste of sovereigns. These masters of the earth must now replace God and ensure themselves of the deep confidence without reserve of those over whom they reign. Firstly: their new holiness, the merit of their renunciation of happiness and comfort. They grant the most humble a hope of happiness, but not for themselves.²²⁴

*

223. Your nobility should not look backward but *ahead!* Exiles shall you be from all father—and forefather—lands! Your *children's land* shall you love:^{*} this love shall be your new nobility—the undiscovered land in the most distant sea. For that I bid your sails search and search. In your children you shall make up for being the children of your fathers: thus shall you redeem all that is past!²²⁵

224. Solitaries of today, who live apart, you will one day be a people: of you who have chosen yourselves will be born a chosen people—from which the overman will be the issue.²²⁶

225. Strange! I am constantly dominated by the thought that my history is not only a personal history, that I serve the interests of numerous men by living as I live, by forming myself, by recounting that formation; it always seems to me that I am a collectivity, to which I address grave and familiar exhortations.²²⁷

226. If now, after a long voluntary isolation, I address men anew and if I cry out to them, “Where are you, my friends?” it is because great things are at stake.

I want to create a new order: *an order of superior men* to whom those with tormented consciences and minds will go in search of advice; men who, like me, will know not only how to live apart from political and religious creeds but who will have triumphed over morality itself.²²⁸

*The marked opposition in German between *Vaterland*, fatherland, literally “land of the fathers” and *Kinderland*, “land of the children” is untranslatable.

227. Let us not forget in the end what a Church is, as opposed to any “State.” A Church is above all a structure for ruling that secures the highest rank for the *intellectuals*, which *believes* in the power of intellectuality to the extent of forbidding itself the use of all the cruder instruments of violence; and on this score alone the Church is under all circumstances a *nobler* institution than the State.²²⁹

228. We who have never had a country—we have no choice, we must be conquerors and explorers: perhaps we will leave to our descendants what we have missed ourselves—perhaps we will leave them a country.²³⁰

229. If we—*friends of life*—do not invent some organization proper to our conservation, it will be the end of everything.²³¹

IV.

Mystical States

Nietzsche's thought as a whole tends toward the integrity of man. It leads to such dangerous failures in order to reject fragmentation: limited honest activity, pursued in one direction. Since God has ceased to distribute a task to each man, each man must take on the task of God: he who cannot in any way be limited loses even the shadow of a "direction" . . . Nietzsche could no longer isolate problems. Moral questions are also political and reciprocal. Morality is itself MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE. This throughout ZARATHURSTRA. This experience, like morality detached from every servile end, is thereby even a moral experience: climbing the summits of evil and laughter—making disarming freedoms from nonsense and an empty glory.

*

230. One day, and probably soon, we need some recognition of what above all is lacking in our big cities: quiet and wide, expansive places for reflection. Places with long, high-ceilinged cloisters for bad or all too sunny weather where no shouting or noise of carriages can reach and where good manners would prohibit even priests from praying aloud: buildings and gardens that would altogether give expression to the sublimity of meditation and of distance from the world. The time is past when the church possessed a monopoly on reflection, when the *vita contemplativa* always had to be first of all a *vita religiosa*; and everything built by the church gives expression to that idea. I do not see how we could remain content with such buildings even if they were stripped of their churchly purposes. The language spoken by these buildings is far too pathetic and embarrassed, reminding us that they are houses of God and ostentatious monuments of some intercourse

with the beyond; we who are godless could not think *our thoughts* in such surroundings. We want to translate ourselves into stone and vegetation; we want to take walks *in ourselves*, when we stroll around these buildings and gardens.²³²

231. I love even churches and tombs of gods, once the sky gazes through their roofs with its pure eyes, and like grass and red poppies, I love to sit on broken churches.²³³

*

232. The tension of my cloud was too great between the laughter of lightning bolts I want to throw showers of hail into the depths.²³⁴

233. You have never yet been able to cast your spirit into a pit of snow: you are not hot enough for that. Hence you also do not know the ecstasies of its coldness.²³⁵

234. You are no eagles: hence you have never experienced the happiness that is the terror of the spirit. And he who is not a bird should not build his nest over abysses.²³⁶

235. Life—that means for us constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame—also everything that wounds us; we simply cannot do otherwise.²³⁷

236. The new feeling of power: the mystic state; and the clearest, most daring rationalism serving the path to reach it.

Philosophy: the expression of an extraordinarily elevated state of the soul.²³⁸

237. A rapture whose tremendous tension occasionally discharges itself in a flood of tears—now the pace quickens involuntarily, now it becomes slow; one is altogether “outside of oneself,” with the distinct consciousness of countless shudders of one’s skin creeping down to one’s toes; a depth of happiness in which even what is most painful and gloomy does not seem something opposite but rather conditioned, provoked, an *indispensable* color in such a superabundance of light; an instinct for rhythmic relationships that arch over wide spaces of forms—length, the need for a rhythm with wide arches, is almost the measure of the force of inspiration, a kind of compensation for its pressure and tension.

Everything happens involuntarily in the highest degree but as in a gale of a feeling of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity.²³⁹

238. Suppose someone has flown often in his dreams and finally, as soon as he dreams, he is conscious of his power and art of flight as if it were his privilege, also his characteristic and enviable happiness. He believes himself capable of realizing every kind of arc and angle simply with the lightest impulse; he knows the feeling of a certain divine frivolity, an ascent without tension and constraint, a descent without condescension and abandonment—without *weight!* How could a human being who had had such dream experiences and dream habits fail to find that the word “happiness” had a different color and definition in his waking life, too? How could he fail to—desire happiness differently? “Flight” as described by poets must seem to him, compared with this “flying,” too earthbound, muscle bound, forced, too “heavy.”²⁴⁰

239. Is it our fault that we were born for the air, clear air, we rivals of the beams of light, and that we wish we could ride on ethereal dust specks like these beams—not away from the sun but *toward the sun!* That, however, we cannot do. Let us therefore do what alone we can do: bring light to the earth, be “the light of the earth”! And to that end we have our wings and our speed and severity; for this are we virile and even terrible like fire. Let those be terrified by us who do not know how to gain warmth and light from us!²⁴¹

240. To me it seems one of the rarest distinctions that a man can accord himself if he takes one of my books into his hands—I even suppose that he first takes off his shoes, not to speak of boots.

When Dr. Heinrich von Stein once complained very honestly that he didn’t understand a word of my *Zarathustra*, I told him that this was perfectly in order: having understood six sentences from it—that is, to have really experienced them—would raise one to a higher level of existence than “modern” men could attain.²⁴²

241. Definition of the mystic: one who has enough and too much of his own happiness and who seeks a language for his happiness, because he wants to *give it away.*²⁴³

242. The states in which we infuse a transfiguration and fullness into things and poetize about them until they reflect back our fullness and joy in life: sexuality; intoxication; feasting; spring; victory over the enemy; mockery;

bravado; cruelty; the ecstasy of religious feeling. *Three* elements principally: *sexuality, intoxication, cruelty*—all belonging to the oldest *festal* joys of mankind, all also preponderate in the early “artist.”²⁴⁴

243. Man’s greatest distance and greatest depth and what in him is lofty to the stars, his tremendous strength—are not all these frothing against each other in your pot?²⁴⁵

244. One must want to *live* great problems, in the body and in the mind.²⁴⁶

245. I have always put all of my life and all of my personality in my writings, I know nothing of what might be purely intellectual problems.²⁴⁷

246. I want to awaken the greatest mistrust against me. I speak uniquely of things lived; I do not limit myself to the ways of the mind.²⁴⁸

247. To consider inner life as a drama is a degree above simple suffering.²⁴⁹

248. “But where in the end do the floods of all that is great and sublime in man pour out? Is there not an ocean for these torrents?”

“Be that ocean, there will be one.”²⁵⁰

249. You only know these things in the state of thoughts, but your thoughts are not lived experiences within you, they are only echoes of the thoughts of others, thus your room shakes when a truck passes. But me, I am on the truck, I am often the truck itself.²⁵¹

250. And how many new gods are still possible! As for me, in whom the religious, that is to say god-forming, instinct occasionally becomes active at impossible times—how differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time! So many strange things have passed before me in those timeless moments that fall into one’s life as if from the moon, when one no longer has any idea how old one is or how young one will yet be . . .²⁵²

251. *What* does joy not want? It is thirstier, more cordial, hungrier, more terrible, more secret than all woe; it wants *itself*, it bites into *itself*, the ring’s will strives in it;

—it wants love, it wants hatred; too rich, it gives and throws away, begs that one might take it, thanks the taker, it would like to be hated;

—so rich is joy that it thirsts for woe, for hell, for hatred, for disgrace, for infirmity, for the *world*.²⁵³

252. There are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to be tragic; and rolling together all the woe of the world—who could dare to decide whether its sight would necessarily seduce us and lead us to feel pity and thus double this woe?²⁵⁴

253. He that is richest in the fullness of life, Dionysus, the Dionysian man, loves not only the sight of the terrible and questionable but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation. In his case, what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies that can still turn any desert into a lush farmland.²⁵⁵

254. Here are hopes; but what will you hear and see of them if you have not experienced splendor, ardor, and dawns in your own souls?²⁵⁶

*

255. My wise longing cried and laughed thus out of me. Born in the mountains, verily, a wild wisdom—my great broad-winged longing! And often it swept me away and up and far, in the middle of my laughter; and I flew, quivering, an arrow, through sun-drunken delight.²⁵⁷

256. And we should call every truth false that was not accompanied by at least one laugh.²⁵⁸

257. Who among you can laugh and be elevated at the same time? Whoever climbs the highest mountains laughs at all tragedies, imaginary or real.²⁵⁹

258. In despite of that philosopher who, being a real Englishman, tried to bring laughter into ill repute among all thinking men—"laughing is a bad infirmity of human nature that every thinking mind will strive to overcome" (Hobbes)—I should actually risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter—all the way up to those capable of *golden* laughter. And supposing that gods, too, philosophize, which has been suggested to me by many an inference—I should not doubt that they also know how to laugh in a new and superhuman way—and at the expense

of all serious things. Gods enjoy mockery: it seems they cannot suppress laughter during holy rites.²⁶⁰

259. This crown of him who laughs, this rose-wreath crown: I myself have put on this crown; I myself have pronounced my laughter holy. Nobody else have I found strong enough for this today.²⁶¹

260. What has so far been the greatest sin here on earth? Was it not the word of he who said, "Woe unto those who laugh here"?²⁶²

*

261. A god who would come to earth must not *do* anything except wrong: not to take the punishment upon oneself but the *guilt* would be divine.²⁶³

262. One is most dishonest to one's god: he is not *allowed* to sin.²⁶⁴

263. Enjoyment and innocence are the most bashful things: both do not want to be sought. One shall possess them—but rather seek even guilt and suffering.²⁶⁵

264. It is with man as it is with the tree. The more he aspires to height and light, the more strongly do his roots strive earthward, downward, into the dark, the deep—into evil.²⁶⁶

265. We should reconsider cruelty and open our eyes. We should at long last learn impatience lest such immodest fat errors keep on strutting about virtuously and saucily, as have been fostered about tragedy, for example, by philosophers both ancient and modern. Almost everything we call "higher culture" is based on the spiritualization and deepening of *cruelty*: this is my proposition. That "wild beast" has not really been killed; it lives and flourishes, it has merely become—divine. What constitutes the painful voluptuousness of tragedy is cruelty; what seems agreeable in so-called tragic pity, and at bottom in everything sublime, up to the highest and most delicate shudders of metaphysics, receives its sweetness solely from the admixture of cruelty. What the Roman in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the cross, the Spaniard at the stake or a bullfight, the Japanese of today when he flocks to tragedies, the laborer in a Parisian suburb who feels a nostalgia for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerian who "submits" to *Tristan and Isolde*, her will suspended—what all of them enjoy and seek to drink in

with mysterious ardor are the spicy potions of the great Circe, "cruelty." To see this we must, of course, chase away the clumsy psychology of bygone times which had nothing to teach about cruelty except that it came into being at the sight of the suffering of *others*. There is also an abundant, overflowing enjoyment at one's own suffering, at making oneself suffer.²⁶⁷

266. Man is the cruellest animal. At tragedies, bullfights, and crucifixions he has so far felt best on earth; and when he invented hell for himself, behold, that was his heaven on earth.²⁶⁸

267. My first solution: the tragic *pleasure* in watching what is highest and best sink (because one considers it too limited in relation to the Whole), but this is only a mystical way of anticipating a superior "good."

My second solution: supreme good and supreme evil are identical.²⁶⁹

268. To see tragic characters sink and *to be able to laugh*, despite the profound comprehension, emotion and sympathy that one feels, that is divine.²⁷⁰

269. Much about your good people nauseates me; and verily, it is not their evil. Indeed, I wish they had a madness of which they might perish like this pale criminal.²⁷¹

270. Every virtue inclines toward stupidity; every stupidity, toward virtue.²⁷²

271. The advent of the Christian divinity, as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth. Presuming we have gradually entered upon the *reverse* course, there is no small probability that with the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God there is now also a considerable decline in mankind's feeling of guilt; indeed, the prospect cannot be dismissed that the complete and definitive victory of atheism might free mankind of this whole feeling of guilty indebtedness toward its origin, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind of *second innocence* belong together.²⁷³

272. A criminal is frequently not equal to his deed: he makes it smaller and slanders it.²⁷⁴

273. Would that you might invent for me the justice that acquits everyone, except he who judges!²⁷⁵

274. The Greeks were rather closer to the notion that sacrilege, too, might have some nobility—even theft, as in the case of Prometheus; even the slaughter of cattle as the expression of insane envy, as in the case of Ajax—and in their desire to invent some dignity for sacrilege and to incorporate nobility in it, they invented *tragedy*.²⁷⁶

275. *Whom do you call bad?*—Those who always want to put to shame.²⁷⁷

276. *What do you consider the most humane?*—To spare someone shame.²⁷⁸

277. *What is the seal of liberation?*—No longer being ashamed in front of oneself.²⁷⁹

278. You must yet become as a child and without shame.

The pride of youth is still upon you; you have become young late; but whoever would become a child must overcome his youth too.²⁸⁰

279. What fantasies about the inner “misery” of evil people moral preachers have invented! What *lies* they have told us about the unhappiness of passionate people! “Lies” is really the proper word here; for they know very well of the overflowing happiness of this kind of human being, but they kept a deadly silence about it because it refuted their theory according to which all happiness begins only after the annihilation of passion and the silencing of the will.²⁸¹

280. Independence is for the very few; it is a privilege of the strong. And whoever attempts it even with the best right but without inner constraint proves that he is probably not only strong but also daring to the point of recklessness. He enters into a labyrinth, he infinitely multiplies the dangers that life brings with it in any case, not the least of which is that no one can see how and where he loses his way, becomes lonely, and is torn piecemeal by some Minotaur of conscience. Supposing one like that comes to grief, this happens so far from the comprehension of men that they neither feel it nor sympathize. And he cannot go back any longer. Nor can he go back to the pity of men.²⁸²

Notes

The following notes reproduce the editorial notes from Georges Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 6 (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), pp. 377–474. I have occasionally amended or expanded, often silently, the notes provided by the Gallimard editors for clarity and continuity and for a contemporary Anglophone readership. Editorial remarks, whether my own or by the Gallimard editors, appear in italics. Annotation that is substantially my own is generally indicated. Trans.

A note on references and citations: Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from works by Friedrich Nietzsche, listed by book and aphorism or section number (indicated by §), or, where relevant, chapter title. When quotations derive from works other than those by Nietzsche, full citations are provided. Where Bataille provides a traceable citation in the body of the text (as in, for example, a quote from The Gay Science followed by an aphorism number), I do not provide further annotation in the endnotes. When Bataille provides an inadequate citation, as in the dates of composition for quotations from The Will to Power, I follow his example in the main body of the text but provide further annotation in an endnote. My guiding logic was to allow the main text to carry as much, or as little, information as did the first edition of the work.

Some of Bataille's citations are inconsistent, incomplete, or inaccurate. For some citations he provides page numbers, for others aphorism or section numbers, for others only a year. In the case of incomplete citations, I have attempted to trace these quotations and, when successful, provided a citation in an endnote. Not all quotations have been traced. I have corrected the inaccuracies that I could correct, often silently, and noted those which were inaccurate but untraceable. I have regularized the references throughout.

Bataille does not quote from the German texts of Nietzsche's works, though his borrowing records from the Bibliothèque Nationale indicate that he occasionally examined German editions of some of Nietzsche's works, including Also Sprach Zarathustra, at various points over many years prior to writing On Nietzsche (see Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 12, pp. 549–621). Instead, Bataille's quotations derive from then current French editions and translations of Nietzsche's works. Those editions and translations have since been superseded, for the Francophone reader, by the

current standard edition of Nietzsche's Oeuvres philosophiques complètes, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, published by Gallimard in sixteen volumes. The English-language translation of the Colli-Montinari edition is unfortunately incomplete, though forthcoming, at this time. Partly for this reason, for the Anglophone reader and as noted above, my citations reference Nietzsche's works by book title and aphorism or section number rather than page numbers.

In the absence of a definitive English translation of Nietzsche's works, and in order to facilitate reading this book as a record of Bataille's engagement with Nietzsche, my quotations generally follow the well-known and easily available translations of Nietzsche's works by Walter Kaufmann, silently modified where necessary to reflect language specific to Bataille's thought. See references to specific works in the notes below.

*The problems of reference and citation are most acute with reference to the collection of Nietzsche's notes and drafts known as Der Wille zur Macht (*The Will to Power*). Bataille's many references to The Will to Power pertain to the version edited by Friedrich Würzbach for the edition of Nietzsche's complete works published by Musarion in the 1920s. Würzbach's editorial intention was not to present Nietzsche's notes in their order of composition but rather to organize the notes and drafts into a compelling presentation of the philosopher's thought as a whole. His edition does provide annotation for each note as to its location in the previous edition of Nietzsche's works, published by Kröner. The Würzbach version of The Will to Power was translated into French by Geneviève Bianquis as *La Volonté de Puissance* and published by Éditions Gallimard in two volumes, in 1935 and 1937 respectively.*

*Among many other problems with the work, the Würzbach-Bianquis edition of *La Volonté de Puissance* does not correspond to any other current edition of *The Will to Power* in German or English. The current English-language edition of *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (Vintage Books, 1968) corresponds to an earlier German-language version of the collection. It includes 1,067 numbered notes spanning the years 1883 to 1888. *La Volonté de Puissance*, by contrast, includes 2,394 notes spanning Nietzsche's entire career. Nor do the editions follow the same organizational schema. *La Volonté de Puissance* presents its material in two volumes divided into four books rather than in one volume.*

*Bataille frequently quotes from the original French edition of *La Volonté de Puissance*, providing date, volume, or page number references. Since the pagination has changed in subsequent printings of the work and in keeping with the now standard style of reference to Nietzsche's writings, I cite from *La Volonté de Puissance* by volume, book, and note number. When passages from *La Volonté de Puissance* also appear in the current English-language edition of *The Will to Power*, I provide the relevant note number. I also provide reference to the volumes of the Kröner edition of Nietzsche's works by volume and note number. *The Will to Power* is a translation of volume XVI in the Kröner edition, so notes from that translation do not include reference to a Kröner volume.*

In some cases, I have been unable to trace Bataille's quotations beyond their sources in the French translation of Nietzsche's work from which he was quoting, as in

the case of notes included in the French translation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra by Maurice Betz. Given the nature of this book, however, where the burden of interest falls clearly on Bataille's engagement with Nietzsche, this limitation should, I hope, be tolerable.

In the text, Bataille notes that On Nietzsche: The Will to Chance was written from "February to August 1944"; the manuscripts, however, span the period from late January to early October 1944. The book was published in February 1945 by Éditions Gallimard. Extracts of pages 104 to 109 were published in Cahiers d'Art, 1940–1944, under the title "A Hauteur d'amitié" (At the Height of Friendship); a title recalling that of the first section of Bataille's previous book, Guilty (Gallimard, 1944; English translation State University of New York Press, 2011).

In 1954, the second edition of Inner Experience listed On Nietzsche as the third volume of Bataille's multivolume La Somme athéologique, volume two having been Guilty. The anticipated second edition of On Nietzsche was to have been followed by a second edition of Mémorandum (Memorandum), a collection of citations from Nietzsche, published separately by Gallimard in 1945 (see below). However neither On Nietzsche nor Memorandum was republished during Bataille's lifetime. See my introduction above for additional contextual information.

In these notes, we refer to the following manuscripts:

Ff. [Box 13, C, 77–84] = 8 pages from a notebook, dated January 25 and 26, 1943, corresponding to our pages 86–92.

A [MS 6] = 2 bundles of pages from two notebooks:

- a) 57 pages dated January–March 1944, corresponding to our pages 67–81.*
- b) Pages 1–86, dated April to June 1944, corresponding to our pages 83–120.*

B [MS 5] = 220 pages, unnumbered, corresponding to our pages 3 to 58, 121–152, 165–183.

(We did not recover a manuscript for pages 61 to 66 and 153 to 162.)

C [Env. 115, 1–43 and 10 unnumbered pages] = manuscript for a "lecture on good and evil" given on March 5, 1944, at Marcel More's house, reprinted here under the title Summit and Decline (see part two). This lecture was followed by a "Discussion on Sin," published in Dieu vivant in 1945; for an English translation of the discussion see Georges Bataille, The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 26–74.

D [Box 9, A] = 141 pages of notes and drafts and a manuscript for an unpublished "part four," Philosophical Epilogue.

M [Box 14, P] = folder for Memorandum, 30 pages of "notes for a preface."

E = numerous stylistic corrections on Bataille's copy of the text.

Below are:

- a) Variants;*
- b) Notes and drafts from A, D, and M;*
- c) The Philosophical Epilogue and accompanying notes.*

a) Variants

First, the “Publisher’s Insert” from the 1945 edition:

This book was to have been published on the occasion of the centenary of Nietzsche’s birth (October 15, 1944); toward that end, it would have had to been sent to the printer in August . . .

What’s more, the author was then so tangled up in his thought; he could not get out of it in any way. No one would have read the book who did not at the same time accommodate this principle: “To go to the end of the worst impossibility;” to the end of the greatest obstruction. Imagine intelligence off to as bad a start as a figure from a dream, in shirtsleeves, at a boring meeting.

Today neither relaxation nor the absence of lucidity imposes a contempt for rules: but thought alone with itself is called to the ultimate impossibility.

Make no mistake about it: the exercise of thought becomes difficult—and more ponderous than you would have believed—regular developments surprise “us.” When “we” understand them, we say, “Really, who knew? Isn’t this the feeling of the impossible again?” We come after Nietzsche.

And yet . . .

We must—our thought should—succeed, liberate action.

The problem posed in this book is that of man, unable either to trick himself any longer or to fragment himself before facing the necessities of a world in greater and greater motion. This book at once seals the agreement between pure madness and the simplest (most demanding) rationality.

Nothing is more laughable, more worthy of the difficulties encountered by the confusion of a “Fascist Nietzscheanism”: Fascism is a fact of those who thought they could succeed by shouting, who put the world at the mercy of those who speak loudest—and dishonestly.

A band around the first edition read:

At the antipodes of fascism
Published for Nietzsche’s Centenary

Epigraph

John Ford, ’Tis Pity She’s a Whore (1633), Act V, scene 6, lines 17–24. Bataille borrowed John Ford’s Annabella [’Tis Pity She’s a Whore] Drame in 5 actes. Trad. et adapt. M. Maeterlinck (P. Ollendorff, 1895) on May 8, 1933, returning it July 12, again on August 12, 1934, returning it November 9. See Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 12, pp. 591 and 596.

Preface

1. 1881–86, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra (Thus Spoke Zarathustra)*, Maurice de Betz translation (Gallimard), p. 302. See Memorandum § 11.
2. *B breaks off here, beginning again with section 6, “But what does this fragmentation mean . . .” See the notes and drafts from D below.*
3. 1882–1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 629; XII, part 2, § 97. See Memorandum § 5.
4. *Ecce Homo*, The Case of Wagner, § 4. English translation by Walter Kaufmann in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 1968).
5. *E, in the margin:* Written in October 1944.
6. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, On Reading and Writing. English translation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra by Walter Kaufmann in The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1954).
7. *The Gay Science* § 172. See Memorandum § 141. See *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974).
8. 1887–1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 466; *The Will to Power* § 881.
9. *B: [. . .] not a “whole man.” Reciprocally the “whole man” is whoever grasps in himself the sovereign purpose of being.* He defines at that moment the totality of being that can be subordinated to the results of an action. From that moment the tragedy begins: if this man alone is the one being in whom being is not subordinated to any result external to himself, the whole man has nothing to do. In other words, he is himself the intended result—which no inner result could complete. Obviously he cannot have a moral end: he is himself the end . . . Totality is within him that which has nothing left to fulfill: it is only an empty aspiration, an unfortunate desire to conserve itself for no other reason than this desire—that it “wholly” is—to burn. In this it is the “mad wish to laugh” that I said was itching for an orgy, holiness, death . . .

6.

Undoubtedly so strange a problem [. . . see section 7]

10. *E, in the margin:* To annul the specialist’s reason for working (reducing it to material gain).

11. *Allusion to La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 589; XIV, pt. 2, § 303. Trans.

B:

[. . .] it’s perfect transparency.

7.

[Crossed out: At the same time the whole man is the absence of a goal.]

But—as I've said—the whole man is perfect idleness. The necessary lightness with which I've spoken of the whole man couldn't prevent seeing that, for human beings, the leap into totality is the most agonizing test. Through the renunciation of solidity, acquired some time ago, activity and its results have permitted human beings to insert their existence into time effortlessly. The whole man is also desire [*crossed out*: is desire itself. The whole man is satisfied man. Satisfied man would be the void. The totality in him is that of love, it's the exasperation of desire.] and his totality belongs to freedom, to the absence of limits of desire. The fragmentary state of man [. . . see § 6 paragraph 4 and note 8 above].

[. . . see § 6 paragraph 4.] In each moment, the possibility is given to him to advance toward the chosen goal: his time becomes a march toward this goal (this is what is normally taken for life). Similarly, if his salvation is his object.* The whole man already *has* everything that the others are seeking: including the sovereignty the thirst for which causes so much blood to flow (as for salvation . . . : [*crossed out*: he hates the lie of salvation] how would he flee *what he is?*). He cannot desire to acquire it but only to give it. In other words, the object of his desire cannot be a good, cannot consist in the good of a being, but only in pure and simple expenditure. In this regard, he considers the good of another as a delusion, since if he wants the good of another, it's on the condition that he find, in this way, his own good. In the end it's about senseless expenditure and no longer giving in order to gain.

Hence this strange state: the whole man does not know what to do in this world, he measures silence . . .

8

If I want to realize my totality within my consciousness, I must relate myself [. . .]

12. *B (a first draft):* [. . .] a frightful mental disorder. Humanity, as existence held in common, runs this risk in the form of adventurers detached from it.

13. *Kraft durch Freude:* "Strength Through Joy," abbreviated *KdF*, was a state-run organization to promote and facilitate leisure activities in Nazi Germany. The organization sponsored libraries, plays, concerts, holidays, and short- and long-term tourism, from day trips to cruises. The organization ceased to be viable in 1939, at the beginning of World War Two. Trans.

14. *B:* [. . .] Without any doubt, it would be a lamentable abortion viewed from the perspective of action. Not only is Nietzsche's life a failed life, from this point of view, but so would be that of anyone who attempted to put his doctrine into practice. It must also be said that from a point of view surpassing action there is no longer any success, any result corresponding to an intention, but a leap

**Note from Bataille:* Similarly again if he vainly attempts to become everything. The whole man is not the whole or one who attempts to be, but one who cannot choose a particular activity [*crossed out*: for as object].

into the unforeseen. Nietzsche's fundamental will was to liberate the future from the chains of the past: this assumes risk, the free expiration of a reality creating itself without the limit of a preexisting determination. Action in light of a defined, therefore known, goal does not really respond to this demand for creation, only the randomness of risk does. Beyond the limits of action, after the despair resulting from the abandonment of perspectives reassuring *homo faber*, speech [page missing]

15. *B, in the margin:*

At the end return to the theme of the beginning

A tension with going mad

16. *This line echoes Hamlet's dying words, from William Shakespeare's Hamlet (1603), act 5, scene 2, ln. 357. B, first draft:* The rest is the festival, the chance of the whole man: and since no dam can check chance . . .

Part One: Mr. Nietzsche

1. The Gay Science, *Preface to Second Edition*, § 2.

2. B, first draft:

Why so attached to this doctrine, to the memory of a man—of Nietzsche, whom I think often erred, whom no one followed, no one could follow . . . ? Could he have defined the summit, the possibility of the impossible?

Illness, I think, forced him to. This no longer matters to us. I live, if you want to know [. . .]

[Second draft:]

[. . .] no one followed, no one could follow? . . .

It's because he shattered the limits of man given in his condition.

a possibility beyond human limits,

dislocation, as at a festival, lightly laughing, at obstacles

and not only the end of kneeling,

bold agonizing, advancement, across an unknown ground, impossible.

[Third draft:]

Shattering the limits given by our condition within himself.

He designated a possibility beyond human limits,

rupture, as at a festival, lightly laughing, at obstacles,

and putting an end to kneeling,

bold, agonizing advancement, across an unknown ground, impossible . . .

I live, if you want to know [. . .]

3. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 424; XII, pt. 1, § 341,

p. 183. Bataille's citation is inaccurate, corrected here. Trans.

4. *B, first draft of the three preceding paragraphs:*

These men obviously don't exist. This is what I must say rather quickly. They have barely entered into the problematic: a kind of bookish, doubtful, larval life. Mr. Nietzsche himself, his works and his life, is part of this accident: *one fine day, the man's limits were gone*.

Intelligence lost its footing. Man is that animal who in his limit—in his particular necessity—perceives weakness . . . and, thereafter, understands himself as being an obstacle to *what he is*: the absence of limits.

For what he is, he is not. Nietzsche said: *Become what you are.* This means: become the possibility existing in yourself. *What is this possibility “fundamentally”?* An absence of limits. But the absence of limits is the *impossible*.

The perspectives found in faith in God reduce this problem to nothing. One does not reach this major problem before standing on one's own legs. Before throwing away the crutches.

Man equal to the impossible—that *he is*: as long as struggle is necessary, it is an anticipated problem . . . Found however in the absence of God.

God was only a moment in the struggle that we have carried out against ourselves.

To rest on one another = struggle.

I hear rolling thunder and howling wind [. . .]

5. 1882–1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, §2; XII, pt. 2, §168.

6. *The Gay Science*, § 322.

7. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 611; *The Will to Power* § 913. See Memorandum § 171.

8. 1882–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 127; XII, p. 400, 1.4–11.

9. 1882–1885, *Notes for Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, § 75.

10. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 529; XII, pt. 1, § 242.

11. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, §408; XVI, pp. 436–40.

12. 1887, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 216; *The Will to Power*, §

910. See Memorandum § 70.

13. *B, first draft:*

I said it, yes:

Communicated, as life is in a community of *dedicated* individuals, voluntarily dedicated, to a test: *to go to the end of the possible*. Certainly nothing less stupid . . .

Every sentence belongs [. . .]

14. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 372; XIV, pt. 2, § 71.

See Memorandum § 9.

15. *B gives this reference: Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 343; XIV § 305.

16. *B: [In margin: at the beginning of notes on community]*

“Ceaselessly become what you are, be the master and the sculptor of yourself.

You are not a writer, you only write for yourself. In this way you maintain the memory of your best moments. You are preparing yourself for the moment [. . .]

17. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 339; XII, pt. 1, §367.

18. 1887–1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 30; *The Will to Power*, § 971. *B, in the margin: the song of the night.*

19. *Ecce Homo, Why I Am a Destiny*, § 1.

20. *B*: “A philosophy that does not promise to make us more happy or more virtuous, that on the contrary lets it be understood that one will very likely perish in its service, that one will be isolated from one’s times, burned and scalded, that one will have to pass through all kinds of contempt and hatred, that one will need a great deal of hardness toward oneself and unfortunately also toward others, such a philosophy does not insinuate itself easily into someone; one must be born for it.” (1884 [La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 23; XIV, pt. 2, § 291])

My life is a community with Mr. Nietzsche . . .

This book is this community, nothing but.

I am writing myself, on my own account:

“I don’t want to become a saint . . . The truth speaks through my mouth . . .”

[Crossed out: In this community] And we live, it must be said, in ignorance, all of us . . .

What do I know about Mr. Nietzsche?

Constrained to illness, to silence . . .

What do we still have in common?

Hatred of Christians.

Not to mention the others.

But we, who are so small? What can we do, if not . . . ?

21. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 3, § 381; XIV, pt. 1, § 291.

22. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 528; XIII § 114.

23. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 3, § 323; XIII § 692.

24. 1882–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 643; XII § 409.

25. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 631; XII, pt. 1, § 282.

26. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 589; XIV, pt. 2, § 303. See Memorandum § 92.

27. Daniel Halévy, *The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), p. 277.

28. Daniel Halévy, *The Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 279.

Part Two: Summit and Decline

1. This second part presents (with a few modifications that are found in these notes) a lecture on sin given by Bataille on March 5, 1944, at the home of Marcel Moré. A discussion followed the lecture. A transcription of that discussion along with summary notes on the lecture by Pierre Klossowski, a response by Reverend Father Jean Daniélou, and a letter from Bataille appeared in *Dieu Vivant*, n 4 (1945); for an English translation, see *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001) pp. 26–74. For additional biographical information, see my Georges Bataille (*Reaktion Books*, 2007) pp. 171 ff. Trans.

2. C: [Crossed out: The questions that I am going to pose appear to me to be of interest to human beings independently of the opinions that they uphold in general. Of course, our nature opposes an end that has not come our way, a kind

of opacity absent from the most insidious questions that anticipate it. It would not be excessive however to avoid the questions that follow in the name of pre-given responses. It would be unfortunate, it seems to me, to get away through some facility for lacerating interrogation.]

The questions that I will introduce . . . [. . .]

3. *C*: [. . .] their violation. I will avoid reference to texts. These judgments are necessarily within us and we can extract them from our feelings; or they are fictions without consistency. Whatever the case, our feelings and our judgments are undoubtedly very complex: in contradiction with a first affirmation, the good seems linked to contempt [. . .].

4. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 146; XV § 219.

5. *C*: In the first place, I will show that the summit that is death on the cross is the greatest violation of being: it is this not only in the being of God but through repercussion from that of everyone who is guilty, which is to say, all men. This is how it assures Redemption, which is to say it reestablishes communication between God and human beings.

[*In C, all of the passages in italics appear at the end of the manuscript.*]

6. *C*: [. . .]. Insofar as a man does evil, he puts Christ on the cross. Not Pilate's executioners, but the sins of the world since Adam crucified him, or rather sacrificed God. This action is horror itself, but the historical agents are relatively innocent: what human life hides [. . .].

7. *C*: [. . .] In this way a wounded God and guilty beings, equally wounded, communicate. This communication constitutes the mystery of redemption: in the night of the crucifixion, the integrity of beings is violated right through; man and God lacerate one another and bleed together.

In the night of the crucifixion, evil can be said to reach the summit of evil [. . .].

8. *C, at the end of the manuscript, crossed out*: [. . .] “Communication” is love; love links itself to laceration and cannot be separated from bitterness. The feeling of malediction in love testifies to the depth of the presence of the sacred.

9. *C, at the end of the manuscript*: Now I will show how, in the “communication” that is love; desire has as its object the beyond of the being that desires. And beyond the being is, first, nothingness. In the transparency of nothingness, through the sacrifice, desire has the sacred as its object. The necessity of finding the beyond of the being through nothingness gives communication its characteristic of rape, of sin.

10. *C*:

[*See previous section*] The position of human beings is in fact so strange that they condemn themselves from all sides. They must communicate among themselves: the absence of communication, the egotist folding into himself, is obviously the most condemnable. But communication cannot take place without touching the integrity of beings; communication itself is guilty. The good undoubtedly is the good of beings, but we do not attain it without putting beings themselves at risk.

It is not only Christian sacrifice that gives evil an action necessary for the good. In a general way, sacrifice seems to have been regarded as a crime. Now we

can identify sacrifice with communication. [*In the margin:* here add material from Mauss.] To make the link between [. . .]

11. *C*: [. . .] (dies). Through this slippage I discover the being beyond myself. The being of the other and my own slipping together, coinciding together in the same nothingness: the beyond of my being, in the ever-equivocal shock that is communication, responds to an exasperated desire in the moment.

This way of seeing [. . .]

12. *C*: [. . .] same explanation. In sacrifice, communication takes place between the one who sacrifices (or the participant) and the victim. The desire of the one who sacrifices bears him beyond his being, which is to say, immediately, onto the nothingness of the victim. But the nothingness of the victim is in no way distinct from that of the one who sacrifices, and it is in this region of nothingness discovered suddenly through the death of the victim that a sacred presence is revealed. This presence of the beyond is hardly more than an inversion of the nothingness: it is, if you will, nothingness made substantial, granting the action—the putting to death—that engenders it, an active character but maintaining from the limitless, dangerous character of nothingness, the value of contagious destruction. This beyond of being is fundamentally only a destruction of the limits of being, but this destruction, resulting from a desire, is active and substantial. (As substance, the body of the victim bears it and symbolizes it.) Neither in the act of putting to death nor in the sacred result is there anything that cannot be lacerating, nothing that can be immediately taken to be the good of the being: it is on the contrary its danger, its evil. It is undoubtedly a response to the *desire* of the being, but the desire is not regarded wrongly as a danger, desire is perhaps hardly different from anguish.

I think that the sovereign desire of the being [. . . see note 23 below.]

B, a first draft, crossed out:

[. . .] In sacrifice, “communication” first unites the one who sacrifices (or the participant) and the victim. The desire of the one who sacrifices bears immediately on the nothingness of the victim. This nothingness, however, into which he places the victim is initially only a reflection of his own nothingness. The putting to death opens the void over which the survivors lean.

In the conceptions of the Ancients, the sacred presence that ensued was formally the inversion of this void: it is nothingness made substantial, bearing on action—the putting to death—that engendered it, an active character but maintaining from the nothingness, the infinite, dangerous nature, the value of contagious destruction. The “communication” of sacrifice, like that of the flesh or of laughter, takes place in this confused slippage. More precisely, “communication” is itself this slippage. What justifies the inversion is the fact that a “communication” is substituted for the beings and the voids. “Communication” is not a being: it cannot be expressed in terms of things. The conception of a sacred object betrays this impotence of language. Besides, it was necessary for the constant orientation of behaviors.

13. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 484; XII, pt. 1, § 129.

14. *B*: In the realm of sensuality, [crossed out]:—place of election of desire, of anguish—I’ll take the example of temptation.

Temptation is the work of the flesh represented as an at once desirable and dangerous possibility.

Sexual deviance is often noxious, and the state of temptation is not always linked to the moral attitude that hates it for itself.

The temptation of the flesh is only a common imagining of misery: it even reveals the misery of all moral life. In temptation, in anguish, solitude encloses and is ponderous. What desire denounces as being the enemy is the limited circle of the single being. The being without air—without “communication”—riveted in solitude to itself alone experiences a feeling of overwhelmed sadness. Friendly conversation is lacking or disappointing. Chatter nourishes more than it sets apart a feeling of emptiness [for C, see note 23 below.] A being of flesh [. . .]

15. *In D, these notes:*

In temptation, boredom suspends the being over the nothingness that he discovers in himself.

From the perspective of duration, the necessity of finding forms worthy of enduring

- City
- God-Church
- Individual: *no*
- Freedom?

The difference between the nothingness that one discovers in oneself and the nothingness beyond the self.

In fact: on the one hand, without communication, being is nothingness; on the other hand, communication brings in the risk of nothingness.

A paragraph developing this opposition should be inserted.

*

Temptation prolongs the wait in the circle.

It can be the act of the devout. But more simply of a man enclosed by the absence of occasions to his taste. In this second case, temptation locates the possible separation in face of the boredom. Boredom is not at risk in ordinary circumstances. Life ordinarily has sufficient possibilities for communication. Whatever they may be, even [indifferent] available like those of the devout—God is available at any hour—they can fail. What boredom then reveals is the nothingness of the being enclosed on itself and unable to “communicate.” Undoubtedly “communication” is not a being, but if a being ceases to “communicate,” the being itself withers: it decays, feeling (obscurely) *that on its own, it does not exist*. From this interior nothingness, boredom returns anguish to it from the outside.

Temptation is precisely this return.

Boredom can return to such a possible “communication.” But “to communicate” is not generally easy. What is more ordinary is that the possible “communication” appears as a danger.

Not to “communicate” condemns me to boredom, it’s true, but “to communicate” is to slip outside, to lose oneself. It is not the act of romantic

madness to speak of the various ways that one might die well. Whether they have other people or God (or the absurd unknown) as an object, lovers avoid seeing it with difficulty. On the other hand, offering oneself to some common cause (on the level of social life) really commits one to the point of death. What makes this difficult to see here is that death is implicated in each case in very different ways. The desire to communicate is related to the equilibrium. To someone who is bored, communication initially seems to be seduction itself.

[*In the margin:* the difficulty that I have raised is in showing that communication passes necessarily through anguish—that without anguish there is no real communication but only the possibility of boredom. To show this, the closed-off forms (without anguish) must be opposed to the open forms (without boredom): I must use these two phrases more or less a little further on.]

This seduction exerts a power—on a man who is bored. “Communication” is life.

[*In the margin:* There would not be any difference in a sense between “communicating” and being if communicating were not at the same time losing being (discuss a little later).]

16. 1884–85, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4 § 550; XIV, pt. 2, § 168. *Bataille provides inaccurate dates for this quotation.*

17. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience* (State University of New York Press, 2014) pp. 96–97.

18. Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, p. 97.

19. *Ecce Homo*, *Why I Am a Destiny*, § 8–9. *B gives this other citation:* To deny its merit, but to create what surpasses all praise, even all comprehension.

1885–1886 [*La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 611; *The Will to Power* § 913.]

20. Reference to a phrase from a play by Terence, Heauton Timorumenos (*The Self-Tormenter* [163 BCE]): “*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*,” *I am human, nothing human is alien to me*. Trans.

21. *B, in the first draft, crossed out:*

But the hatred of lassitude is exerted before everything else and principally against [crossed out: sexual excess, harmful by all evidence] the meaning.

Obscenity as a naked summit is the type of this that they condemn.

In this way it seems that the essence of a moral act—in the common sense—is to serve some utility—to relate to the good of some being this movement through which the being surpasses being. It’s in this [*incomplete*]

22. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 52; XIV, pt. 2, § 2.

23. *C has the following for paragraphs 3, 4, and 5:*

[See section 3 above:] I think that the sovereign desire of the being has the beyond of the being for its object, that anguish is fear linked to understanding the dangers that this sovereign desire causes to run through the being. It is of course that we no more commonly perceive the effect of desire in the realm of sensuality than in that of sacred things. I will choose, as the easiest to grasp, the theme of temptation, which is to say that work of the flesh appearing as a possible, at once desirable and dangerous. Sexual deviations are always rather noxious, and the state

of temptation or of resistance is not always necessarily linked to the moral attitude that condemns it as sin. In any case I think that temptation of the flesh implies more than a momentary concern for pleasure. In temptation, which is to say in anguish, solitude encloses and weighs down. What desire denounces as being the enemy itself, is the being itself: the limited circle that I myself am for myself. The being that no longer communicates, riveted in solitude to itself, to itself alone, experiences in a feeling of overwhelmed sadness its absence of communication. The possibilities of friendly conversation can be lacking or seem deceptive. Superficial contacts sometimes increase more than putting off until later the impression of a lack. In the case of a believer, sacred presence often seems insipid or ungraspable compared to other possibilities. The moment comes when the being is bitten by the desire for the beyond of the being and that is when it aspires to nothingness, when it demands nothingness as the condition or the point of departure for this beyond.

[*End of the manuscript:* I will now attempt to account for the reasons for which sensuality, the most accessible form of communication, is however the privileged realm of nothingness.]

Only the nothingness, to which the being is tempted to abandon itself, proves to that being that there is really a beyond to his limits. At this moment, what characterizes the aspirations—about which I can say insistently that they are the most *profound*—is the feelings that the beings normally desired, as they can be in the case of a God or a beloved woman, are not situated in the beyond of the being but in too close a prolongation, in the subject's own realm of boredom. Strictly speaking, the devotee will make an effort to convince himself by representing the wounds of his god, which is to say the traces of the sin of which this god was the victim: the vision of Christ dead on the cross; the vision of the inexpiable sin effectively projects God into this nothingness that alone defines the beyond of the being. Similarly, the lover does what he can to find the beloved in the beyond of the parts hidden under her dress. But these efforts are vain in principle, ending up at least by being vain, because our nothingness (if you'd prefer: the power to evoke it) cannot remain where we designate it. What typically, effectively exhausts the nothingness of devotion or amorous passion is that eventually they only signify the being to which tenderness or piety is linked. What takes on in our eyes the value of true nothingness, the value of night in which being ruins itself, cannot be found for long in the direction in which our devoted will leads us. We can hardly find the nothingness other than precisely where we would not like to go.

Temptation is in a sense the extreme moment of sensuality. It is effectively to the extent that we reject it that it makes us afraid, that sensuality has the power to make us attain nothingness. Insofar as temptation is accursed, sensuality determines at our limit an abyss whose depth cannot be exhausted, a nothingness that is never filled by a regular course of things. Its ruinous disorders and the fatality of its excess deprive the sensual world of every possibility of happiness, of appeasement, of quietude: no substantification is conceivable if the horizon is obscenity. We enter

into this world from the side of filth and the impression of the void that it gives us in the first place opens in us an evidently incurable wound.

It's the fact that man falls into sensuality despite himself that causes nothingness to signify the nothingness of nothings: the nothingness that is the most difficult to change into insignificance, by prolonging the boring void of the being.

[*End of the manuscript:* But sensuality is not only linked negatively to nothingness. In its positive elements, it is still the negation of an essential principle of morality, which is merit, to which it opposes chance.]

At the same time that, through asceticism and resistance, sensuality becomes the depth of the abyss, its positive disorders have received, like its negative depth, a privileged meaning. The horrors of temptation, the lacerations that it brings into the lives of ascetics, respond no less than the excess of the men and women free from the extreme signification of the flesh. It is to the precise extent that the nothingness of the flesh is deep, bitter, that we reach, through it, the summit. Strictly speaking, for the debauched individual, sensuality eventually becomes insignificant, insipid: it is not the same in general; certainly, it is not the same for the devout. For the devout, it constitutes one of the poles, the black pole, of the spiritual world. Obviously this is about joy, lacerating joy. It is about so much more joy, so much more laceration filled with wonder than the principles of devotion that are opposed to it. The final objection is the hurt that debauchery causes those who deliver themselves to it: this puts in question the good and the interests of these beings, it seriously compromises their future. But for the non-Christian, there is no question of avoiding excessive expenditure, endless disequilibrium: the Christian is confronted with eternal punishment. On one side, it can hurt him, working for the eternal good of his [*crossed out:* being] soul; on the other side, he communicates with the beyond of this very being—this beyond of a shameless, lost freedom, obviously what nakedness signifies—but he loses himself. In the most common situation, this choice opposes merit, on the side of salvation, to chance, which gives perdition its most seductive colors but makes it, at the same time, it seems, morally insupportable: exceptional beauty, richness are evoked by the disorders of the flesh. If the attracting light of these disorders is the sign of a summit, this summit is only open to chance; the virtue to which a moral goal is normally proposed is on the contrary set aside, made ridiculous.

[*End of the manuscript:* In fact, what characterizes sensuality is that it is diametrically opposed to morality (to morality enacting rules). Morality is founded on concern for the future, sensuality on indifference for the future.]

I think that the nature of morality is more clearly evidenced in the case of sexual disorder. Insofar as we take it upon ourselves to give other people rules for living, we can appeal to merit and propose as an end the good of the being—which is achieved in the time to come. Chance and achievement in the present time represent, from a moral point of view, nonsense. Morality is always a speculation relating to the future of meritorious actions. Doctrines of grace and their persistent influence on the second level demonstrate this, although the aspirations at stake in morality are far from being satisfied by this poor speculation. That access to a

summit depends not on calculations, such as merits, but on chances granted for inexplicable reasons, is what alone—most difficult in human eyes—maintains the value of the expected recompense. However, no one speaks of pure and simple chance or certainly lets go of concern for the time to come. To affirm that the being and its egotistical will for conservation are in a sense bad, and that a pure concern for the present and negligence toward the future are on the contrary laudable, seems to exceed our capacities.

[*End of the manuscript:* In any event, in the realm of sensuality I will demonstrate however what relaxation normally represented. Audacity and extreme courage can be necessary for sexual freedom. Chastity on the other hand is a calculus of interest. Inhibition is on the side of egoistic conservation.]

It is clear that relating the good to the being [*in margin:* considered as a duration] is questionable and that wanting to endure is not glorious. Morality normally draws itself out by substituting, up to a certain point, the good of others for our own good, which avoids the question for a time. We can on the other hand imagine how difficult a morality of desire would be. It's a banality to describe the life of a man who has given himself up to pleasure as a hell. Holding nothing back, burning without hope is undoubtedly the conduct most contrary to relaxation. As Christian moralists have repeated, the pleasure of the senses is the most dangerous: it is an illusion in any case. To say of so exhausting a pleasure, that it is a moral summit (in this expression the word moral has the widest possible meaning) has nothing to do with the abandoned cowardice that one normally imagines. Cowardice on the contrary often commits one to sexual abstention, to sagacity. One cannot deny that erotic transports burn and carry human inquiry to extreme lacerations. Is not the refusal of this evidence itself an expression of fear linked to the feeling of an undeniable danger, of an exhausting disorder that must be limited?

[*End of the manuscript:* Undoubtedly we must account for the differences between the diverse possibilities for egoistic good. A certain egoism has a corrosive value for society, another is beneficial, another implies the renunciation of immediate egoism. This is effectively the business of morality insofar as morality proposes rules for life, to propose these important differences. But our aspirations are beyond these rules; our desires aspire to the moral summit. And would the moral summit not exist, if one looks into the depths, on the side of sensuality, more precisely on the side of crime? Of crime that does not have the satisfaction of an egoistic good as its object.]

Couldn't one see that morality is in no way the response to our ardent desire for a summit, but on the contrary the barrier that we set up against those desires. An ulterior goal is required by the refusal to satisfy our present desire. This goal is the good of the being. The disorderly expenditure of energy that engages our desire to surpass the ordinary limits of the being is not favorable for conservation, which is to say for the good of the being. Whether this is [. . .]

24. C:

[. . .] The lacerated regions that designate vice and crime indicate no less the summit than the distress or the strength of the man with the power to attain it.

[*At the end of the manuscript*: I think that the definition of such a summit must be given. If, at the limit, the summit is crime, it is because it puts us—and everything that exists—in question.]

Thus what I call the summit is the point we reach only by exhausting our forces, always in some way within an inch of death. Obviously this concerns what is revealed in love, which is to say burning desire in search of “communication.” Desire in “communication” bears essentially on the beyond of the being. But this beyond is not only the nothingness that limits us, toward which we throw ourselves, wanting to touch another being; it is at the same time the interrogation of the being that we are. In other words, nothingness and the being-other, objects of our desire, do not so much appear to us in their objective exteriority. We can surpass our limits only by putting ourselves at risk and this risk transfigures the object of desire. Thus it clearly seems that at the limit human desire, and desire is what we are, bears precisely on the interrogation of ourselves and of everything that exists. This is what accounts for human disquiet ceaselessly engaging the destiny of the being through the greatest dangers.

Our desire puts us at risk, and we perceive its object decked out in the colors of this self-risk, we perceive it in light of this self-risk.

[*At the end of the manuscript*: But if it is true that through sensuality and crime man can put his being at risk as well as that of others, must we not see a limit here? Can we not go further, come to a more complete risk by eliminating—perhaps—the shameful results of actions like murder and debauchery?]

If I now consider Christian ecstasy in light of the principles I've presented [. . .]

- 25. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 547; XIV, pt. 2, § 235.
- 26. *B*:

But if it is true that through sensuality and crime man can put his being and that of others at risk, must we see a limit here? Can we not go further, come to a more complete risk by eliminating—perhaps—the shameful results of actions like murder and debauchery?

[*In the margin*: unconditional side—no more need for chance]

If I now consider [. . .]

- 27. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 709; *The Will to Power* § 864.

- 28. *Ecce Homo*, *Why I Am So Clever*, § 9.

29. *C (and B)*: [. . .] labor of deliverance. But consciousness of misery alone does not suffice for his effort: it must associate the abomination that is *waiting* with fear. Ascetic practices are *human* [. . .]

30. Spring 1888, *Fragments Posthumes*, 14 [182], *Oeuvres philosophiques complètes* (Gallimard, 1977), p. 143. *This passage also appears in notes for Bataille's novel Julie; see Bataille, Romans et Récits* (Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2004), p. 488. *Trans.*

31. *C*: [. . .] The extreme night of the flesh demands an authentic innocence, which is to say the absence of moral pretension, thus, as a by-product, the feeling of being guilty. And the rest is literature.

By opposing myself to popular confusions [. . .]

32. C (and B, crossed out) at the end:

We have to take* the values of decline for what they are: judgments formulated through prudence, inspired by fear. We must withdraw the prestige given them by the opposition of good and evil, in which the good *must* be done, evil destroyed. Here there can be no positive summit morality. But the critique of the morals of decline, their reduction to what they are, represents in this sense a negative possibility. Even if it is true that our fate is in part and fundamentally linked to the faculty of subordinating the present to the future, it is bad for us to become intoxicated with tasks that we take on for this reason, bad for us to take pride in simply inevitable servitude.

Now I will return to the statements from the beginning. I showed evil linked in part to the prejudice brought to beings—and in part, in a contradictory way, to the existence of individual beings (not accepting confusion with others). I will add the possible conciliation, according to which evil would be interest itself, in opposition to the interest of the other, which would be the good, that we *must* serve. Before formulating the questions for which the preceding exposition is the introduction, I will again seek to show that a real morality (or a group of attitudes) is ordinarily an interference comprising values relating some to the summit, others to decline—the first to the satisfaction of desire, the others to concern for the time to come. This is the case for the behavior of the mystics, Christian or otherwise. But in a regular way, overtly, everything appears to be for the benefit of beings. In the real existence of mystics, violent desires normally entail movements well beyond an impoverished concern for salvation. However, in the group of attitudes, the balance is far from always tending in the direction of desire. If one imagines in this regard the interferences common to all altruistic moralities, it must be said that the moments in response to desire are of little importance. Ambiguity always remains between the ascendant movements that push us to ardently offer ourselves and the consideration necessarily granted to the concern to endure and to enrich ourselves. These moral equivocalities also constitute fairly stable systems of equilibrium [see section 12].

33. C (and B): [. . .] But the next difficulty is to go to the summit, to put oneself at risk *without reason*, at least without a reason that can be stated, to *propose* the summit as a summit, to risk only for the love of anguish.

In other words [. . .]

34. C: [. . .] the limits they have attained. No good for another is a pretext for the movements in which I surpass myself: this good would be assured once and for all, at least to the extent that it would no longer remain the means of assuring something more: no project for reform that causes a great hope. But I must make a remark [. . .]

*In C (at the end of the manuscript) and B, these lines in italic precede the text:

I will state a principle as a conclusion: We can only speak of the summit by altering it, making it equal to decline. But we can reduce moral rules to conveniences that have nothing to do with the summit.

35. *C*: [...] a possibility of catching its breath. But in these conditions it would so to speak enclose in its heart the necessity of *evil*, which is to say, wasteful risk. Overfull of energy to expend, the malefic share of which I have spoken, would become complete, it seems, by poisoning social life.

I have wanted to show [...]

B: [...] a possibility of catching its breath. Would it, in these conditions, enclose in its heart the necessity of *evil*, of wasteful risk? Would it become complete by poisoning the blood?

I have wanted to show [...]

36. *C (and B)*: [...] To the extent that I have put general interest at risk, I have had to subordinate to it considerations introduced through a negation of the primacy of this interest. I have definitively posed the question of the summit in terms of decline. I have just shown for the first time this fundamental difficulty. And the fact of passing to the level of the individual interrogation cannot be entirely set aside. However, if we stay on the level of personal life, it is easier to avoid the laws of language. Man to man, we have a chance to elude surveillance; whereas if we address humanity as a whole, we know in advance that it is deaf to anything that is not expressible in terms of the *good*. Now I'll articulate [...]

37. *C (and B)*: [...] the precise question implicit in my account.

Can I attain or seek, in the absence of a good, a moral summit that is not reducible to the good, to the conservation, the enrichment of some being? I don't doubt that such a summit has been if not attained at least sought under the pretext of the good of a being, overtly given as an end. [Crossed out: But the possibility of a good to be realized must fail: I can have nothing to do that offers my squandering an external purpose. I can, more simply, perceive the delusion that is this proclaimed purpose. But assuming my refusal to lose were exchanged for some gain? Could I still lose at that moment? Should I not honestly give it up? Do we have, in a word, a lucid possibility for life?] But I am speaking for myself: personally, I no longer have a good that I can invoke. I find myself in this world without anything to do here. No reason to surpass myself, I must live at the mercy of laughter [...]

38. *C*: [...] that it might have been? Isn't even speaking of a summit giving up that summit?

B: [...] that it might have been? When speaking of a summit, I give up the summit?

39. *C (and B)*: [...] I consider the extreme difficulty of my situation as a chance, and I have no hesitation in saying that I am intoxicated by it.

Having posed my question in this way [...]

E: [...] LIMITLESS DEMAND.

WHAT CAN HE DO AT THE LIMIT OF THE POSSIBLE?

40. *E*: [...] See above:] He who violently thirsts for the truth asserts that he should be answered without stopping at each question that he poses toward it. To know how to respond to his need to change the world and to thereby see his autonomy reign; but *beyond* this possibility, knowledge, suddenly, changes into its opposite and, *deluded*, he gives in to the violence of a desire without possible object: *beyond*, I cannot attain anything, and just as the red cape announces the

paroxysm of rage and death to the bull, knowledge that cannot respond to the desperate interrogation is the sign of a definitive night, which encloses that much better the fact that every conceivable clarity is hidden within it. But without the night, without despair, and without the irremediable terror that strikes me would I have known the inaccessible happiness of the summit? . . . Responding, out of breath, to the moral interrogation that I proposed to myself in anguish, I would be forever separated. By letting the interrogation open within me like a wound, I extended myself toward suffering and, groaning, I measured the incredible power of death. I don't have the habit of accounting for it, if I reflect, if I speak, but death interrupted me! I will not always have to follow the controlling search for the truth. Every question will ultimately remain unanswered. And I will conceal from myself in that way that silence, following me, like lightning, will have fallen. Others who respond to the task won't complete it either, and in the end death will cut off their words . . . Then being—or the absence of being—will be autonomous!

At the moment, my breath fails, but the air I have reached is the free air of the summit.

[*What follows are notes from D that extend the first pages of A—cf. also Part Three, note 2 below:*]

The question of good and evil.

Evil is inevitable. It is in general that from the outside which is felt as such.

In saying evil, man attributes to himself responsibility for the distress he experiences.

But this responsibility possesses a sacred character.

The affirmation of evil implies a struggle against evil, which is to say the good, action in favor of the good.

[*In the margin: this paragraph is the pivot*]

These movements of attraction or repulsion take place in regard to beings, individuals, families, cities, humanity in general. It is for oneself, for one's family, for the city, or for humanity in general that human beings do good. But these different goals are contested, which is to say rejected as evil in the search for good. Evil is in its essence a responsibility. You could say that it is the effect of particularity, that it can only be suppressed by suppressing particularity itself. And even that particularity is evil. Even man in general can be considered evil.

Insofar as there is a possibility of struggle, to some degree, there is no difficulty in resolving the question. Not only does the struggle satisfy the desire for good, it legitimates the share of evil that man cannot fail to assume. The good of the city, Christianity, etc., implies evil.

From here, to go further into the depth of things. Isn't evil or sin the basis of communication? Which is to say the sacred. There is in fact a malefic sacred and another that is benefic. But the sacred is always dangerous. The sacred is the fusion of beings in place of their separation. The sexual act. Sacrifice, death, are the loss of

limits, but linking the nothingness that they discover to a kind of beyond of the being (beyond of nothingness) revealing itself as desirable, more desirable than the being.

Benefic communications include marriage and the Christian Church. They are opposed to open communication. Open communication is malefic, the other benefic. Struggle, enterprise—the actions of beings—are required to make communication benefic. But interest is found to be miserable, a justification of sin.

Setting out from these considerations, morality ceases to be subordinated to the categories of good and evil. There is no longer, on the one hand, anything to suppress, or on the other, any responsibility. But a simple difference in value between a summit of human possibilities and the inevitable decline. The summit is nothing other than the maximum laceration—of communication—possible without perishing. It cannot be attained without an excess of strength. All weakness on the contrary orders decline.

What one calls the good, the responsible normally form the two kinds of values, the values of the summit in service of the values of decline.

Decline is decline of strength, the summit the excess of strength. The values of the summit must not be confused with putting strength in service of a small group. The aristocratic world profits from the values of the summit, it makes use of them as much as possible without realizing them. They form morbid excrescences that are pretend summits.

The summit is naturally the festival.

*

The imperative of the summit is not pleasure.

However pleasure is an elementary judgment of value.

Pleasure defines the moments of slippage to the beyond as the most important.

Judgments of value opposed to pleasure are calculations of subsequent consequences

Some in the form of a sacred prohibition

Others of prudent reserve.

In them pleasure is nonetheless the sign of the contestation of another's value.

In another sense pleasure is [fragment]

*

In torture, the refusal to speak touches on the integrity of the being.

To speak is to let the integrity of one's being be violated, but not in conditions in which communication is desired (is the object of a desire).*

*See the note for February 1 below.

Fundamentally the question of good and evil is not posed in torture. It is the being that is shattered, that's all.

In regard to someone who stretches his soul under the threat of a minor constraint, without having had to be put up against the wall, it's a different question: he has not considered the link between friendship and fidelity as a good worthy of being maintained. I myself value this good, and my valorization is a demand for that of others.

*

In their independent principles of decline, without requiring any relationship with the summit, are situated behaviors *without which communication would be impossible*: the hatred of lies, loyalty, fidelity even under torture.

Contrary behaviors testify to the lack of value given to *communication*, as a consequence of a base character, unable to orient itself toward free space.

A coherent morality is still possible starting from this point. I don't question its interest. Essentially I have had to speak of the summit: nothing is valued in moral matters that does not first compel silence.

Part Three: Diary

February–April 1944

1. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 583; XIV, pt. 2, § 157. See Memorandum § 236.

2. *We could not find a manuscript for the first section of this diary. See note 5 below.*

3. André Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Trans. Richard Seaver and Helen Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969) p. 124.

4. *Notes to Zarathustra*, p. 326. See Memorandum § 170. The dates given in Memorandum differ from those given in *On Nietzsche*.

5. *In A, these pages are preceding:*

January 28, 1944

If I say of pleasure that it is the measure and the foundation of values, I am getting ahead of an experience. I must recall not only, in the words of Racine, "this majestic sadness that creates all the pleasure of a tragedy,"* but in moments that are the most lacerating, the most . . .

*Jean Racine, "Preface" to *Bérénice* (1670). Bataille quotes Racine's *Phaedra* in Inner Experience and anticipated including a review essay on Racine in at least one outline for *La Somme Athéologique* (see Inner Experience, p. 281). For the review essay, see "Racine," Critique 37 (juin 1949): 552–6, reprinted in Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 11, pp. 497–501. Trans.

Interrupted. I'll take this up again further on.

I come home in the night from the home of F. D. after a theological discussion (on communication and sin).^{*} In the dark street, coming out of the mouth of the metro, a group of young men and women singing solemnly:

Do you have to be drunk

To find the hole

To piss

I followed them to the urinal, happy to hear the girls singing that in the night. In the street leading to the attic where I am living, happy that I should end up there, in such an apparently dangerous place. During the afternoon B's painting of a girl at a window was unveiled.^{**} Still during the afternoon, I was rapturously happy, what extravagance!

What I said to Father D.:

That the good is the good of a being, to some degree. But the good is no less opposed to the being, to its egoism (whether we're talking about an individual, a family, etc. hardly matters).

That sin is the violation of a prohibition (the prohibition necessary for the maintenance of the integrity of beings). There is no communication without sin. Sin is an act of a being giving in to the desire to go beyond its own being. The integrity of his own being (and the integrity of the other) must be shattered in order to do this. This is how it is in sexual relations and in the sacrifice on the cross.

Christ was put to death by sins.

Nature is thereby surpassed. Father D. said of sin that it introduces a spiritual order—superior to the natural order, preliminary to sin.

I showed the opposition between sins of the flesh and spiritual life, the first distaining [*duration?*], the second founded on a concern for eternity.

From this opposition I passed to another deeper one.

Sometimes communication has the closed being as its end. Sins of the flesh can be subordinated to marriage, spiritual life to the power of the Church. Sometimes it has the open or lacerated being: acts of the flesh are committed through vice; the mystical life is preferred to the Church. The opposition is encountered just as often in the world of the flesh as in the world of the spirit.

^{*}F. D. here is undoubtedly Reverend Father Jean Daniélou. Father Daniélou made a presentation in response to Bataille's lecture during the "Discussion on Sin" at Marcel More's house on March 5, 1944, just over one month after Bataille wrote this note. See *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, pp. 26–74. Trans.

^{**}Bataille had been living at 3, cour de Rohan, in the studio of the painter Balthus since returning to Paris from Vézelay in October 1943. Balthus was the brother of Bataille's friend Pierre Klossowski, who arranged these lodgings. Bataille lived there until April 1944, when he moved to Samois-sur-Seine, rue du Coin-Musard, to be near Diane Kotchoubey de Beauharnois. Trans.

In part there is a summit, in part decline.

The impossibility of opposing a morality of the summit to sexual freedom. Disquiet, absence of relaxation. Renunciation of shelter. The importance of the idea of preliminary strength, of expenditure. Difficulties and advantages of this materialist notion. Setting out from the being, from the strong being, in the direction of a loss of being: communication, not nothingness, beyond the being.

The necessity of lending a share to virtue but in the formation, not in the end toward which the being gives itself: virtue accumulates strength. What does the pleasure of virtue signify?

February 1

The theme of action, which is to say of deferment, needs to be shown endlessly. The cessation of the possibility of deferment is the situation in which the question is posed for the first time without conceivable reserve.

The opposition of morality claims: you will not give up a name under torture. This precept means you will not against your will violate the integrity of your being.

March 7

It seems to me that some of my friends confuse their concern for a desirable value with the disgust that a certain category of beings inspires in them. I am surprised by this disgust. The value or the good, if you prefer, is inaccessible. I like people of all kinds: discerning one from another with an outraged sympathy. I never cease to surprise myself: in my eyes, the weaknesses of the best, the complete degradation of the greatest number, the impudence of some, betray all the character of human beings. I no longer see an ideal human nature, from one side and the other a [*cursed?*] general weakening, but sad and poignant like a prison. Our nature is indivisible, and we live profoundly stuck to the povertyes that lift up our hearts.

In our categorical condemnations [. . .]

6. At the time of this conversation between Bataille and his friends, Doctor Petiot had fled, but the remains of incompletely burned corpses had just been discovered in a particular hotel on the rue Lesueur where he had stayed. Under the pseudonym Dr. Eugène, passing as a member of the resistance working with an escape network, Petiot lured people to rue Lesueur who were threatened by the Gestapo, wanting to flee France, carrying money and jewels in their suitcase. Under the pretext of vaccinating them to satisfy the regulations for immigration, Petiot gave them a lethal injection then watched their agony from an adjoining room through a viewer (the "periscope"). He dissected the corpses, throwing parts into a pit with lime, also dispersing other parts in the countryside and in the Seine. Having heard talk of the escape channel, the German police arrested "Dr. Eugène," attempted to make him talk under torture, then imprisoned him. Upon leaving Fresnes prison eight months later, Petiot, who actually lived on rue Caumartain, wanted to burn the remains of the corpses, but left too quickly. The boiler wasn't working and the chimney caught fire. The firefighters discovered the macabre debris in the basement. Sixty-three people had been killed on rue Lesueur. After the liberation,

Petiot succeeded in incorporating himself into the Valmy barracks under a false identity. He was arrested on October 31, 1944, tried and executed in 1946.

7. A, at the end:

Value in relation to what?

Indifferent to myself

(I see)

what encircles me

calm, empty expanse

that is nothing

the absence of limits

escapes me in every way

the immensity annihilates itself

at the same time that it annihilates me

(I am no longer anything)

but a slippage into this empty expanse

Everything slips away

slowly

(I am bound by the weight of the earth

but) the earth slips away

in a movement in which each thing is separated

and floats

carried by the immense movement

that is neither the fall nor the absence of the fall

but that opens infinitely

vertiginously

in all space

[Then, under the title (?) "The movement of worlds," there are 15 pages of notes for The Accursed Share, see *Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 7, pp. 584–8. And then:]

March 21

Not long before the war [. . .]

8. A: A precondition of drunkenness is that one mock everything, including oneself.

Kierkegaard's leap.

The greatest love [. . .]

9. A: I hopelessly love the escapee, the open door—that it is. The abrupt movement—the demand—that it is, deliciously annihilates this ponderous world.

In the space of your heart

I fall it's emptiness

at the dawn of swallows
lacerating your immensity
will I laugh in this sky*

I'm striped like an arrow
your absence blood flowed
beyond my strange laughter
you are in the pure wind
you are the day**

your happiness
irradiates the rooftops
it lacerates the naked***
you are my arrow my sword
the thread the sunlight****

you are the flame that dies*****
the transparency of cries
your laughter is the mad dawn
pure freedom
of naked breasts.*****

10. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 396; *The Will to Power* § 1039. *See Memorandum* § 84.

11. *A, at the end of the poem (see preceding note):*

March 23, 1944

It's a joke on my part to say of a woman who would bind herself to me (I'm not saying who would love me) *that she would be entering into a religion.*

She would stink no less from this—happy to stink—at the address of those who *live in the world* (morally or otherwise). (Undoubtedly she would stink only on the condition of having had her foul odor in advance: my encounter would nevertheless be the consecration.)

*In A, following this, the draft and the definitive text of this unpublished poem.
Draft, lines 4–5:

Lacerating this immensity
Could I still laugh?

***Draft, lines 9–10:*

you are in the cold wind
you are beautiful you are the day

****Draft:* it pierces the naked

*****Draft:* slicing the sunlight

******Draft:* you are the flame that is born.

******Draft:* of your crack.

She would at the same time know herself, for herself and for me, to be more pure than the blue of noon.

Between us there is a profound separation, a world enclosing itself on itself, on one side, and, on the other, a dizziness—that lacerates and opens—existence without limitation. To choose is to know oneself from the dizzying side.

This morning I woke up [. . .]

12. *A*: [. . .] a name—as one does with flowers. *Yoga* is a very distinct form to which Buddhist *meditation* must be linked. Zen is linked to *Buddhist meditation*. *Yoga* is distinguished by respiratory exercises. Meditation is distinguished (barely at all) from *yoga* through the Buddhist conceptions with which it is associated. *Zen* is defined by a movement of *upsetting virility* that belongs to it in particular.

Impalement differs from Zen through an essential joke. It was a kind of illuminated clownishness to say about it [. . .]

13. *A*: [. . .] Today I insist on saying *impalement*: this seems to me rather erotic.

A joke *that must be true*: would that be the greatest joke? In general, I'm thought of as sad: dying of laughter.

The label to stick on my books: contort yourself a little in the morning before reading them.

From the beginning, teaching the *exercise of impalement* is a clownish task. It implies a conviction: that one cannot teach the *exercise of impalement*.

There will be no mistake about it this time: I did it. I unrolled the carpet: let the clowns leap around in every direction.

Isn't it a fundamental truth that *impalement* should be, for the victim, an inaccessible summit?

A narrow possibility of joking outrages me—don't misunderstand Proust and *impalement*. No end to nausea: everyone wades in the mud. And I cry out—I need to make myself hoarse: *this is how it goes!*

Impalement is thus in the teacup, certainly if one grasps it for what it is (fall of divinity—of transcendence—into the ridiculous).

The double nature of the summit [. . .]

14. *A, at the end*:

Twenty or more years ago, I often visited an old Russian philosopher, Lev Shestov. He disconcerted me with his humorlessness. I was joyful, provocative, and, consequently, failed to conceive of the profound seriousness that benefits from insolence and laughter. Apparently my book on *Experience* is austerity itself. That's misleading: here rigor opens on emptiness and clears the way for an unsettling freedom.

The movement of freedom is sagacious or vain: it undermines contrary positions as sagely as they are justified.

The supports for human nothingness, tragedy, and humiliated despair are quickly made so as to delight in an attack. "We are under attack, we're alive!" Modern believers are charmed by blasphemy: imagining themselves being taken seriously.

In my blasphemies, I take *myself* seriously, myself, that is the sovereign joyousness that they indicate, not this God that is only there to lighten my joyousness—by contrast.

Not to speak of God signifies [. . .]

15. *A*: [. . .] I am obviously speaking of acute states, outside of which I laugh—burst out laughing—and get hard.

16. *A*: [. . .] carry me, lift me, free me from all bonds. I didn't think that a sarcasm of such despair could be seen. I had the feeling [. . .]

17. *In place of these two lines, here A has a draft of a poem later published among notes for The Oresteia (Editions de Quatre Vents, 1945; reprinted in The Impossible); for the notes where this draft appears see Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 3, pp. 542–4.*

Your long nudity the animal forest
the lost road of your deep mouth
I dream of illuminating the sadness of the world

I dreamt of touching the sadness of the world
on the disenchanted bank of a strange marsh
I dreamt of a heavy sea in which I rediscovered
the lost road of your deep mouth

I felt in my hands a filthy animal*
escaped in the night from a frightful forest
and I saw that it was the evil from which you died**
that I call while laughing the sadness of the world

a mad light a burst of thunder
a liberating laugh your long nudity
splendor immense*** finally illuminated me

and I live your pain as a charity
radiating in the night the long clear form
and the delirious cry of your infinity****

*Three crossed out versions of this line:

I held in my bed [. . .]
I gripped in my arms [. . .]
I held in my fingers [. . .]

**At the end, two lines, thoroughly crossed out; possibly:
[crossed out: you laughed] while singing
wandering among the flowers of the [illegible]
[word crossed out] that I call [. . .]

***In notes for The Oresteia: an immense splendor [. . .]

****In notes for The Oresteia: and the cry of the tomb [. . .]

Now I must sing *my most beautiful song*. The one that demands not a storm but a long, interminable low sky of isolation.

“Are we made, you and I, to let a dirty light disfigure us?

“Or rather to be a fire that sings in the darkness?

“Etc.”

March 31

Love is so exorbitant a feeling for me [. . .]

18. *A*: To what however would the magnificence of the world respond if someone—inserted into the weave of the fabric—did not help us guess this fault from which things “would be what they are,” that so many beautiful povertyes communicate an undoubtedly undecipherable message to us—night falls in us, above us—and nevertheless we say: “This destiny that falls to you [. . .]

19. *Expiration here is échéance in French. The word refers to term limits, dates of payment, the period at the end of which a bill falls due. Trans.*

20. *A*: [. . .]—but reflect it infinitely. If it were not hidden, silent, leaving the mind open to quick action, it would be nauseating even for idiots.

21. *A*: At bottom, all beings are only one being, and it nauseates me to think about it. But at the same time that they are one, there is in each of them a personal obstacle canceling out that identity.

Exceptionally, between two beings those obstacles are missing. The impression of *déjà vu* signifies precisely the fall (sudden and hardly lasting) of the obstacles that separate them.

If the impression of *déjà vu* signifies that every obstacle has been lifted, it is natural to stop there. If we could stop there, we would feel ourselves to have been delivered. The totality of things would suddenly be transparent, and what we would rediscover through the vanquished opacity would be ourselves.

Beings are unequally opaque; opacity carries most people away; we are not all equally transparent.

One does not find transparency by *looking for it*: this is why an encounter has so much meaning; it is fortuitous and illuminates us suddenly from within—when we aren’t thinking about it.

The light is not evident from the beginning, but it contributes to a banal interpretation—through which we make an effort to reduce ourselves—a feeling of the world inverted from which decency takes its distance. How irritating are all impressions of *déjà vu*, because of their ungraspable nature.

Physical beauty is transparent. Ugliness is opacity. An ugly man, by the very movement of his virility, passes through his ponderous physique: transparency is active in him; it’s a power to invert more seductive than the absence of obstacles. A woman must be beautiful to be able to be aggressive.

I want to have nothing in common with monks [. . . see section VII of the diary below.]

22. *A*: [. . . see section VII] Sartre—and me.

What strangeness, certainly to associate myself (as Christians do) with Sartre and Camus. We have hardly anything in common but the harshness of our moral

preoccupations and the taste for certain pleasures, innocent it's true but unruly. On the level of ideas, without being enemies, we are involved in different directions.

On the other hand it is tiresome to perceive a relationship with Zen monks who don't drink, don't dance, and don't have lovers. Zen devotion is not disgusting (like devotion in Spain or India). However, Zen monks chant, praise images and masters, and like Christians take a vow of chastity and poverty. [Crossed out: Ugh!]

[*Then this development, ultimately relegated to Appendix 3.*]

The Zen Buddhist sect has existed in China since the sixth century before our era. Today it flourishes in Japan. The Japanese word *Zen* translates the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, designating Buddhist meditation. Like *yoga*, *dhyāna* is essentially a respiratory exercise toward ecstatic ends. Zen is distinguished by a relative contempt for popular forms. The basis of Zen piety is meditation, but for an end it only has a moment of illumination called *satori*. No graspable method permits one to attain *satori*, which assumes sudden derangement, the sudden opening of the spirit. Only unforeseeable strangeness puts one on the path and sometimes brings about *satori*.

[*Two pages of quotations from volume two of D. T. Suzuki's Essays on Zen Buddhism follow. Bataille references D. T. Suzuki, Essais sur le Buddhisme zen. Trans. Pierre Sauvageot and René Daumal (A. Maisonneuve, vol. 2, 1944). See Appendix 3.*]

April–June 1944

1. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 9; XV § 405. See Memorandum § 172.

2. *A, heading:* Samois, April 4, 1944

3. *A, heading:* Vézelay, January 24, 1943

4. *Here follow eight pages from a notebook "more than a year old" [Box 13, C, pp. 77–84] where the poems printed here appear as one poem titled Time is out of joints, in English in the original. The phrase "time is out of joint" is from Shakespeare's Hamlet (1603), act 1, scene 5, line 190. Trans.*

5. *As heading:* Time is out of joints, January 25 [1943]

6. *Draft:* in my heart

[Crossed out: is hidden] curled up together
a white mouse

A: in my heart
is hidden
a dead mouse

7. *Draft:* [Crossed out: I am] to be sick
[Crossed out: I am] to be dead to the world

8. *Draft:* black
silence, I invade the sky
black,
my mouth is an arm
[. . .]
- A: silence I invade the sky
black
my mouth [. . .]
9. *Draft:* O my absent eyes my eyes
10. *Draft:* January 26 [1943]
11. *Draft:* she kills me
I guess
12. *Draft:* is the night
the pole

[Followed by a note from March 1 for Guilty; see Georges Bataille, *Guilty* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), p. 226.]

13. *A, as heading:* April 13–14, 1944, Samois
14. *A:* [. . .] to which minds are devoted. I have not aged as much as a skeptical society has.
15. *A:* [. . .] sleep.
~~[Crossed out: It's strange for me to see that even alone I can't start anything. That this last chance for play sinks me in my fever. That my fever is this chance itself.]~~
- Quai d'Orsay, April 15
The side of life? [. . .]
16. *A, as heading:* Samois, April 16
17. Ecce Homo, *Why I Am So Clever*, § 1.
18. Ecce Homo, *Why I Am So Clever*, § 9.
19. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *On the Gift-Giving Virtue*, § 3; also quoted in Ecce Homo, *Preface*, § 4.
20. *A, heading:* April 19
21. *A:* Z.
22. *A, these quotations from Nietzsche at the end:*

“. . . a formula for the highest affirmation, born of fullness, overfullness, a Yes-saying without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything that is questionable and strange in existence . . .” *Ecce Homo, The Birth of Tragedy*, § 2.

“The new party of life which would tackle the greatest of all tasks, the attempt to raise humanity higher, including the relentless destruction of everything that was

degenerating and parasitical, would again make possible that excess of life on earth from which the Dionysian state, too, would have to awaken again. I promise a tragic age: the highest art in saying Yes to life, tragedy, will be reborn when humanity has weathered the consciousness of the hardest but most necessary wars *without suffering from it.*" *Ecce Homo, The Birth of Tragedy*, § 4.

23. *A, heading:* April 21

24. This is a quotation from "The Crow," a poem by Laure; see Laure, *The Collected Writings* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995) pp. 52–55.

25. *A:*

that nothing has ever been limited, what I evoked precisely in V., writing raised up—and dreaming as one laughs
me like a [. . .]

26. *A:*

No one, if not Z. and M. L. (and again) can imagine what this verse (or the preceding) means:

dice from birds of sunlight

I must nevertheless *without pride* link to my feeling these words from *Zarathustra* (quoted in *Ecce Homo*): "I draw circles around me and sacred boundaries; fewer and fewer men climb with me on ever higher mountains: I am building a mountain range out of ever more sacred mountains." [Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "*The Old and New Tablets*" § 19; quoted in *Ecce Homo*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* § 6.]

I gamble at the edge of an abyss so great [. . .]

27. *A:* [. . .] undoubtedly they would be playing.

With me, Z. is "at the height of play," has provoked me to play.

Once upon a time L.* played. With L., I played. I can no longer rest because I won. I can only play again, revive this truly mad chance . . .

L. played and won. L. died.

"Soon," wrote L. "the ground, whether grassy or paved, failed me, I floated, suspended between heaven and earth, between ceiling and floor. My eyes, rolled back in pain, presented their fibrous orbs to the world; my hands, mutilated hooks, carried a senseless heritage. I rode the clouds a madwoman or a beggar of friendship. Feeling somewhat of a monster, I no longer recognized the humans I nevertheless liked. Finally, I slowly petrified until I became the perfect ornament." (*Laure, The Collected Writings*, p. 6)

A senseless hope arouses me [. . .]

28. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *The Night Song*. See Memorandum § 16.

29. *Ecce Homo, Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, § 3. See Memorandum § 237.

30. *A, at the end:* Is art less than a divination of chance?

*Laure. Colette Laure Lucienne Peignot (1903–1938). See Laure, *The Collected Writings* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995). See also my Georges Bataille (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), pp. 109–17. Trans.

[Crossed out: There should be no divination] Like a woman, chance [crossed out: wants? Feels?]

31. *ad unguem*. Latin: “to the fingernail”; from the phrase “*ad unguem factus homo*,” a highly accomplished or polished man; deriving from the practice of polishing sculpture or woodwork to a high degree of finish. Trans.

32. *A, at the end, two quotations from Nietzsche:*

“States in which we infuse a transfiguration and fullness into things and poetize about them until they reflect back our fullness and joy in life: sexuality; intoxication; feasting; spring; victory over an enemy, mockery; bravado; cruelty; the ecstasy of religious feeling. Three elements principally: *sexuality, intoxication, cruelty*—all belonging to the oldest *festal joys* of mankind, all also preponderate in the early ‘artist.’” (Spring–Fall 1887, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 555; *The Will to Power* § 801)

“We arouse enemies: we need them because of our ideal! By transforming enemies worthy of us into Gods, we elevate and transform ourselves.” (1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 566)

33. Massy-Palaiseau and Juvisy, April 28. Banal repetition of June 1940: but this is only a foretaste. Obviously things will go further. I am writing [. . .]

34. *A:*

Samois.

Arrived on time [. . .]

35. *A*: Wednesday, May 10, 1944. Climbed the Samois tower: an immense expanse [. . .]

36. *A, as heading*: Thursday May 11.

37. *In English in the text. See also Georges Bataille, Romans et Récits (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2004), p. 485. This passage appears as a note to Julie. Bataille’s companion during this period, later his second wife, Diana Kotchoubey de Beauharnois, was a native speaker of English, a fact that may explain the few English language phrases that appear in On Nietzsche, Julie, and other writings from this period. Trans.*

38. *A:*

How can a full being be led to the edge of the void? A laughing being? How can a winning gambler lose?

The hum of a bomber obsesses the sky. One morning a maid coming into the room will say to me: “They’ve landed.” Tomorrow? Later? . . . How hard it is for me to think that these words will undoubtedly mean a brutal separation (inevitable, I think, some day soon). At that moment a full solitude will begin: in this village I am an unknown, solitary, stranger. For an indefinite duration.

Friday, May 12

A pure exaltation [. . .]

39. *A, as heading*: Saturday, May 20
 40. *A, as heading*: May 22
 41. *A, in margin*: In this development on sin: the fact that the sexual act leaves the animal sad in the end.
 42. *Anerkennen: the Hegelian principle of recognition; see G. W. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 111 ff. Trans.*
 43. *A, as heading*: May 22
 44. *A, as heading*: May 23
 45. *A, as heading*: May 24
 46. *A*: [. . .] apparent limits, in some sense in which they appear. It's a question of being human, of the fate of a human being, living, laughing, embracing, dying. If we depend upon a woman—she fascinates and without her the universe is empty.

47. *In A, this passage precedes (printed in part, it was ultimately suppressed in proofs; the text from the proofs appears between brackets below):*

Samois, May 30–31

[Returning from the Ile Saint-Louis (where I saw Monnerot), I walked along the quay. Someone hailed me from Leiris's window. Sartre was there. I had missed him and wanted to see him. I went up. A bewildering discussion began on the *cogito* (between Queneau, Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and me): to know if the *I* that *thinks* is the one that suffers from a corn. During that argument, I perceived a profound difference between Sartre and myself:

For Sartre, the *cogito* is the inviolable, atemporal atom, the irreducible foundation.

For me there is only a relationship: it's a node of real communication, taking place in time. The atom refers to the wave: to language, to words exchanged, to books written and read.

If I die, a book remains.

Sartre stops himself, in a book, at the absence of atomic solidity. Our books are *submitted* to reading—to faulty readings.

Sartre brings a book back to the author's intentions, to the author. If, as it seems to me, a book is communication, the author is only a link uniting different readings.

The atom, in Sartre's eyes, is condemned in that it is essentially incommunicable. But it is immortal, being atemporal.

What strikes me:

If we lose ourselves in others when we die, it is vulgar to die. To die is to fade: death reduces us to common measures.

The excess that I attain, which endlessly surpasses limits, pushes back the limits of the possible, is shed by my death in a common place: chance took place and chance died, so fast it will be time to go.

In fact, if I survive in some place, it will not be where I am in control, but where I am controlled.

What is vulgar is not dying, but dying only by half.

(From the Hegelian discussion that followed, I only noted one sentence:*)

"I gave as a conclusion for thought the appropriateness of the subject and the object, of the self and the not-self: I showed the movement of thought requiring the death of the subject as distinct, the completion of the Hegelian circle, the return to the point from which thought began."

In other words: we must submit to necessity—given in the world of objects—opposed to freedom, which founds the subject.

Submission to physical necessity is in a sense an inevitable result: on the other hand it is death implicated in Hegelian satisfaction.

However:

Appropriateness does not imply submission if the necessity is not itself a law of the world of objects.

The object cannot be its own limit.

I will show that the object, at the moment when the circle is closed, overturns itself like an iceberg, causing its depth of night to suddenly appear.

On the level of the economy, this reversal is operative in the theory of expenditure. If the sum of energy produced is superior to the sum of energy necessary for production, necessity is erased. On the political level, a struggle against it begins.

This struggle assumes the preliminary success of a rational, generalized necessity, in its least ordered forms—military, capitalist.

Yesterday evening, we drank two bottles of wine [. . .]

48. A: Returning, alone, climbing the rocks by the Samois tower.

49. A: Enchanted night, comparable to few nights that I have known: the frightful night in Trento that I spoke of in *Blue of Noon* (the old men were handsome, dancing like gods, the majestic storm, the night seen from a room in which hell . . . : it opened on the dome and the palace of a square out of Shakespeare). The night, the little square in Vézelay [. . .]**

50. See the poem "O the dice thrown" above.

51. Allied forces landed on the beaches at Normandy on June 6, 1944. They liberated Paris on August 25, 1944. Trans.

52. A:

Melun, June 3

[Crossed out: Worn out. 15 kilometers by foot. Between F. and B.,*** conscious of the infinite significance of a new notion of the object.]

*A: From my conversation with S., this:

I gave as a conclusion [. . .]

**See Bataille, *Blue of Noon* (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), pp. 23–24 and Bataille, Inner Experience, pp. 80–85. For additional information, see my Georges Bataille, pp. 113 ff.

***F. and B.: probably Fontainebleau and Bois-le-Roi.

[*The end is carefully erased. We can only make out one other date:* Paris, June 4]
 Paris to Fontainebleau, June 6

Learned of the landing after lunch—news less gripping than I previously imagined.

I had hardly started writing when a train stopped at Maisons-Alfort. An alert, the sixth or seventh today. Aggravated, even anxious.

Passed last night drinking and dancing with a number of friends. Olga K. had fun reproaching me in a hard way for the motivations for my writings. Predisposed against her. Her hardness, that extreme tension seemed necessary. However, her game gave me an impression of a paradoxical reaction. Something is desired: she has to tighten up, become aggressive and complete. A pretext, another . . . My silent disgust for the same things is more unfortunate. It shocks me that a moral influence is unnoticed where naiveté has been violated.

The alert lasted five minutes. My anxiousness was no less pusillanimous than Olga K.'s offended naiveté. But the bombs left traces in the surrounding areas two days ago.

I have a fever, a painful punch in the back.

Samois, June 6, eleven o'clock at night

Found my room. Hymn to life: cat with a butter mustache, teeth bared with laughter.

June 7

I had wanted to laugh last night: toothache (seems finished). Still this morning [. . .] no news. Unfortunate for me that the events coincided with fifteen days of paralysis. I am calm [. . .]

53. A: Ten days ago, upon returning from Paris, it was on the contrary a surprise [*crossed out*: that a stone reminds me of a stone]. I've come to desire [. . .]

54. A:

[. . .] myself.

In Hegelian appropriateness, the object is grasped by an autonomous being. In the simplest interpretation, man is equal to nature insofar as nature is itself equal to itself. Relationships in nature appear effectively as equality with oneself, man on the contrary surpasses himself and surpasses nature. But one quickly perceives that nature surpassed—and denied—by man is essentially nearby nature . . .

June 8

Eleven days [. . .]

55. A: Yesterday, after midnight, began working on the previous thought.* I interrupted it to emphasize [. . .]

*See above.

56. A:

June 9

My real imprisonment—in the room, ten days more—begins this morning (crossed the forest yesterday, went to Fontainebleau). Naturally my notes only offer a deformed image of my life.

Yesterday kids [. . .]

57. A:

At the end of the afternoon, a moment—as long as a blink of an eye!—rupturing my solitude. And the apparition of a hideous ghost.

June 10

Anguish haunts me [. . .]

58. A: A letter from S. this morning raises my doubts: that's how it goes [. . .]

59. A:

[. . .] beyond the walls.

I am this tied knot, asked to name God his denouement . . .

June 12

My life is strange [. . .]

60. A, as heading: June 15.

61. A, as heading: June 16.

62. A:

K. beside me, speaking to me, it was not easy to lessen this feeling: a misfortune was coming. It was obviously improbable: K. was there. But, at that moment, K.'s arrival itself seemed probable . . .

In me, anguish [. . .]

63. A: [. . .] of chance. She despises and refuses chance. I grasped anguish [. . .]

64. A: I add: "in place of the impossible, in place of God, there is chance."*

65. See note 29 above. Trans.

66. 1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 354; *The Will to Power* § 943.

June—July 1944

1. B, title crossed out: Dirty. *The introduction to Blue of Noon was published under this title by Éditions de la Revue Fontaine in 1945, see Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 3, p. 560. Manuscript A ends with these notes:*

The Times

The times give rise to this and that
[tears?] = [undergoing?] (the times) lacerated priest

*On this point, see Bataille, Louis XXX (*Prague: Equus*, 2013), p. 24. Trans.

open legs = lacerated again but enjoying laceration

laughter = directing oneself toward action

acting *beyond* tears, opening, laughter

The one who acts, dances with the times, if he suppresses in action . . .

K.'s despair

Being is chance.

Transparency necessitating suffering.

Following Hegel, I imagine history completed, even if the completion gives me reason, [*crossed out*: consolidating in me the linkage of ideas, I could only sadden myself (Kojève himself . . .). History completed, existence isn't worth it: nothing can be derived from it that will be born: it's a monotonous repetition, or nothing] justifying an idea of the world that at this moment would, could only discourage me.

Kojève supports this position.

[*Eight pages of notes for a Philosophical Epilogue follow. See below.*]

2. E: [. . .] of a Donald Duck [. . .]

3. *Amor Fati. Love of fate. Nietzschean notion developed in The Gay Science,*

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and Ecce Homo in particular, but put perhaps most succinctly in Ecce Homo: "My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it—all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary—but love it." (Ecce Homo, *Why I Am So Clever*, § 10). Trans.

4. B: [. . .] time is history.

But that which did not exist is the unknown.

Play is the unknown. From the source to the mouth.

Retain, in the union [. . .]

[*This whole passage—from "Very randomly . . ."—was written on the back of two medical prescriptions dated June 12 (Paris) and June 17, 1944 (Bois-le-Roi).*]

5. B (*first draft*): K. said of herself that the state of being on the trapeze was the only one that would suit her. Indeed, I imagine her under the bright lights, barely dressed in golden spangles, *suspended* over the void of a circus: the fragile clarity and the flash of an agonizing exercise, executing a move in silence as if it sprang from an intimate necessity.

6. B:

Heralding, what's more, others, equally black but true: thus the effects of the war, which threaten to push me to the most tangible point. Confining me in my suffocating solitude, reduced, without knowing anything, to indefinite waiting.

[*Crossed out*: How light I would be, if I were *alone*.]

[*Crossed out*: How simple I would be in front of dangers, if it were my situation (nightmare so often delicious).]

[*Crossed out*: In front of a house—relatively ugly, freshly colored, refined lines, with a brown poodle sitting there . . .

I sit down by chance, from my wanderings, in a black market restaurant. The costumers are pretty girls (pretty, if you wish), but vulgar, the young men more vulgar still. Lacking even the authenticity of wealth, but living.

Sitting at the bar, an elegant young man says: "I saw two jump" (from an airplane going down).

Comically, I imagine the roughness of figures by El Greco: grand, aging lords, bitterly decomposed within. Over the years, there had never been any possibility of relaxation, only the necessity of control; if not to sink. Now, under the pale glimmers of war, slack existence continues to open up: through lies, watered down, the gay parasite of a tragic adventure, otherwise ignorant of it. Existence traversed by mourning, often nauseating agonies, triumphant in flight.]

Reading a study of Descartes by Jaspers.*

[*Crossed out:* A truth "insofar as source of all existence," says Jaspers, in opposition to a truth of a precise and particular nature—universally obligatory.

Continuing reading Jaspers] I have to go back three or four times to the same paragraph. My thought [. . .]

7. *B:*

[. . .] paralyzes K., [*crossed out:* destroys her: I *see* it, she avoids the obstacles through a [*illegible*] movement, an effortless movement, but the intimate storm of neurosis binds her—freedom itself is that much more painful than being paralyzed by the sickness.]

[*Crossed out:* Beginning this chapter of my book, I represented the movement as the lost dramatic search for decision (in an area I saw as necessary). Superstitious, I believed that chance, which I faithfully followed while I wrote the preceding chapter, would not fail at the moment to touch bottom. The contrary happened: my gaiety and my lack of anguish caused me (five days ago) to enter into a *decisive* phase: the vacillation of complete luck suddenly at stake. But, from there, anguish started again. How can a movement of conquest be maintained? How can play be tightened? Primarily during the time of *waiting*: when no action is possible. The fact of waiting—without play—is fundamentally unbearable: and the essential form of a question without an answer. Playing, waiting: play, wait, the suspended state of dice at the edge of a dice cup, ghosts of time at your throat like a thick smoke.]

To combat anguish [. . .]

8. *B, at the end, crossed out:*

Anguish is horror of time.

Similarly constraint, nervousness.

Whiteness veiled by** damp vapors
or blue
leaving the untouchable horror naked***

*Undoubtedly, Karl Jaspers, *Descartes et la Philosophie*. Trans. Pollnow (Paris: Alcan, 1938).

***Crossed out:* Barred sky covered with

****Crossed out:* or naked leaving the inaccessible immensity naked

low or pure sky
 dead and without beginning or end*
 hair of hissing snakes on my head

burst of** my white eyes
 when I've had too much to drink
 when I fall down wanting to vomit

viper
 that I hate
 from which I turn my eyes away

innocent sky, luminous, laughable
 snake with knotted head
 you are a joke***

II

my hands strangled the sky
 they laughed
 and already fell asleep

in folds of light
 hiding my sickness
 my tears venom [*of?*] my shame****

vermin of coal smoke
 smothering the night expecting a storm
 a child's anguish

pitched from blood from venom
 my feverish hands*****
 content with a good turn*****

**Crossed out:* dead and without foundation or base

***Crossed out:* intolerable sky [*crossed out:* causes] reflection of [.]

****In English in the manuscript. Trans.*

*****Crossed out:* sobs, venom, the pus of crime [shame]

******Crossed out:* my hands trembling heavy with ignominy

******Crossed out:* with demise and dust

[We could not go further than ourselves without emptying the horror with which we are heavy. Measuring the void above which we were suspended. After the fact the nausea made us laugh.]

From the folds of misfortune [. . .]

9. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Zarathustra's Prologue*, § 4.

10. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Zarathustra's Prologue*, § 4.

11. *B, at the end, crossed out:*

I am better, much better this evening. But this noise? Could it be another wave? In the distance? The noise dies down—it returns . . . I'm waiting for a train. The sound dies but the train?

The train finally arrives.

It arrives but I am again crushed by anguish.

12. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 352; XII, pt. 1, § 327.

See Memorandum § 55.

13. For additional remarks on Ernest Hemingway, see “*A propos de ‘Pour qui sonne le glas?’ d’ Ernest Hemingway*,” in *Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 11, pp. 25–27, “*Nonknowledge, Laughter, and Tears*,” in *Bataille, The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, pp. 148–50 in particular, and “*Hemingway à la lumière de Hegel*,” in *Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 12, pp. 243–58. Trans.

14. *B:*

[. . .] for the abyss. Forever God—not finished casting the human reflection into this cry, this call from a cut throat—syllable evocative of a summit of comical horror . . . I respond (I speak to man: “Undress your wife and, if you know how, if you can, penetrate her up to this point: contemplate, at the moment of dawn, of the whites of your eyes, the negation—alleluia of God, time: YOUR chance! Indefinite duration of the loss of yourself—in this lost, prostituted woman, open—that you love!”

If you were a monk [. . .]

15. 1885–86, *La Volonté de Puissance* II, bk. 4, § 552; XIII § 227.

16. 1885, *La Volonté de Puissance* II, bk. 4, § 557; *The Will to Power* § 1051.

17. 1885–86, *La Volonté de Puissance* II, bk. 4, § 404; XIII § 777.

18. *In B, at the end, six unnumbered pages:*

a) Mathematical truths are linked in us to their antecedents and consequents, in the same way that a given species of worm or fish is linked to its structure. Structure makes life possible, agreement with the environment (crawling): in the same way, mathematical truths permit us to make an agreement with the universe.

After an hour of pointless waiting, the anguish once again seizes me, the idea, in reaction, comes to me to lift my glass. To drink to the health of the gods.

I don't have a glass. I wanted however

b) A few years ago, I published a text in a serious philosophical journal. Thereafter, a philosopher friend of mine paid me a flattering compliment (in fact very flattering). But he added: “that said, it's completely mad.”

In the vague way in which my friend understood me it will be granted me that my philosophy (if it is one) is effectively a philosophy of madness. It has nothing to do with seriousness, method, and the meticulous working out that characterizes authentic philosophy.

And yet nothing to do with mysticism.

I doubt I will ever have the occasion (the taste) to entirely explain my reasons.

Today I limit myself to saying:

"Make no mistake: the few concepts that one finds here belong to a coherent order of representations. . . . However."

c) "In this coherence itself, what strikes me is the necessity with which I have agreed to remain appropriate to my object—the nature of which is to elude the cohesion of my mind.

"A dialectical business," you say!

"Here dialectics only gets the business started.

"It may in fact be that a dialectical concept encloses itself (Hegelian time completes itself).

"It may also be that the object indefinitely eludes its own determinations.

"Madness in this case, cannot follow it! However! What philosophy *decouples* is then a means of appropriateness. And the *inquiry* in which it is resolved alone responds to the *gamble* that remains the essence of the indeterminate object."

"This evocation," you say, "is only a point of departure for necessary extended analyses."

I will now specify the meaning of my madness: *it's the hatred of these analyses!*
I am not a professor.

d) In my life I have only once received—by mistake—a letter to Professor Georges Bataille: it was in response to studies on ancient Indian coins . . .

I also recall that there was a time when I was treated without laughing as a scholar: the branch of scholarship was *Roman Philology*.

I forgot everything.

In regard to philosophy, I reached the age of thirty without having taken a course. Not even at school (it was during the war, I learned the essential, on the go, from a textbook with a green cover).

Later, Shestov advised me to read Plato.

From 1933 (I think) to 1939, I followed the course that Alexandre Kojève devoted to the explication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (brilliant explication, equal to the book: how often Queneau and I left the little room suffocated—suffocated, nailed).*

*For a partial transcription of the course in English, see Alexandre Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit. Ed. Allan Bloom (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). See also Raymond Queneau, "Premières confrontations avec Hegel," Critique 195–6 (Août–Septembre 1963): 694–700. Trans.

During the same period, through countless readings, I kept current with developments in the sciences.

But Kojève's course broke me, crushed me, killed me ten times.

e) The wind carries so much away.

What's clear to me:

There is no longer any time to be a philosopher today.

It is time to be a whole man.

To be at once in a way a man of knowledge, passion, and action.

Not to represent oneself as a scientific monster: on the contrary, a man canceling knowledge out within himself, insofar as knowledge [*could be?*] absorbed. Canceling knowledge, forgetting it, mocking it. The same on the other levels. Sacrificing everything that is the totality.

Strictly speaking, this movement of sacrifice, of abandonment, merits the name madness. Totality, in a man, in this way comparable to that of the crowd, demands not only [*presence?*]

the idea of the future

The summit

The game

f) Knowledge, action, joy . . . this is nothing. Totality, which asks of us not only existence but death, also expects oblivion, despair, anxiety from us. To carry knowledge, action, joy to the summit of their possibilities, isn't much, arriving at that height of the summit, concealed up until that point, reveals itself then much higher up. Sleep, absence, in the end, blend their voices with those of a numberless chorus. It is not by going further in the

19. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 548; XIV, pp. 394–5.

See Memorandum § 59.

20. *B*:

Except that chance is the duration of the individual in his loss, the time that the individual is is also the death of the individual.

[*Crossed out*: One does not come to touch the ground by oneself, etc.]

I spare myself, more or less, in any case, the feeling of a humiliating kind of dispersion. I write a book [. . .]

21. *B, at the end*:

Possibilities of extreme concern, of mockery: death.

Fate [. . .]

22. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 20; XIV, pt. 2, § 28.

See Memorandum § 155.

23. *The Gay Science* § 302.

24. *B, at the end*:

[*Crossed out*: The realm of audacity—of impassivity . . .

Compared to armed audacity—I'm thinking of the conquests of Peru, of Mexico—the audacity of intelligence is ridiculous. With the exception of brief

breaks, all intelligence, more or less, from the beginning of its development registers, represents, analyzes depression—objective and inexorable, like a rigorous seismograph. Does all intellectual development function through failure?

That's how it is for me.

I am not speaking of the courage that intelligent men have (or don't have), but of audacity in the exercise of the intelligence—compared to that of the “conquerors”—I will only cite three examples—Nietzsche, Proust, and myself. It seems to me that in these three men, depression equally plays an initial, decisive role: sufficient to assure the development of the faculties, at the same time *personal*, intolerable, and terribly *dominated*. So much that an inversion is produced.]

Like a storm over a depression [. . .]

25. *B, in the margin:*

Zen neglects nothingness, assumes it given

No longer evoking nothingness

The idea of chance must return

26. *Satori. Enlightenment: a sense of finality and contentment in which life assumes a “fresher, deeper, and more satisfying aspect.”* See D. T. Suzuki, “On Satori—The Revelation of a New Truth in Zen Buddhism,” in Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 229–66. Trans.

27. *Bataille*, Inner Experience, pp. 57–59. Trans.

28. *Bataille*, Inner Experience, pp. 135–52. Trans.

29. *B:*

[. . .] present.

IN THE NAME OF . . .

. . . bow down! . . .

I want only chance . . . [. . .]

30. *B, in the margin:*

Return to the idea of time

Chance is like a pivot

Chance as changing the summit desired in suffered misfortune then in suppression of transcendence

31. “*The Widow*” (*La Veuve*) refers to a famous cabaret poem written in 1887 by Jules Jouy, set to music by Pierre Larrieu for Damia (Louise-Marie Damien) in 1924. Trans.

32. *B, at the end, crossed out:*

However, on the condition of giving up limiting the results in advance, I can set the world in action.

This is no longer a question of defining a superman like a Borgia. All anticipation is contrary to the spirit of play. I can however play.

Synthesis is freedom.

33. 1887–1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 466. The Will to Power § 881.

34. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 300; XIV, pt. 2, § 7.

35. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *On the Three Metamorphoses*.
36. 1872–1873, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 592; The Will to Power § 797; *therein dated 1885–1886*.
37. Bataille later references Romain Rolland's *La Vie de Ramakrishna* and his *La Vie de Vivekananda* in "Expérience mystique et littérature," in Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 11, p. 85. Romain Rolland (1866–1944) lived in Vézelay from 1937 to 1944; Bataille lived there from March to October 1943 and again from June 1945 to May 1949. Trans.

August 1944

1. We do not have a manuscript for this Epilogue. There are, however, eight pages from a notebook [envelope 17], dated from Bois-le-Roi [August 8–10, 1944] and from Samois [August 12], which Bataille included with a folder for Scissiparity: see Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 3, pp. 544–8.

2. See Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 3, p. 547.

Appendix

1. For this first appendix, manuscript B has the following sketch, a draft of an article published in Combat (October 20, 1944) under the title "Nietzsche est-il fasciste?" (Is Nietzsche Fascist?); for the article as published, see Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 11, pp. 9–11. All of these texts rely heavily upon Bataille's earlier article "Nietzsche et les fascistes" (*Nietzsche and the Fascists*), originally published in Acéphale 2–3 (January 1937): 17–21; English translation by Allan Stoekl in Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, pp. 182–96.

For us, the centenary of the birth of Nietzsche—born October 25, 1844—could be the occasion to say: a German philosopher, an ancestor of fascism . . . , because Germany and fascism the world over today are conducting the most violent of wars! Go further.

Fascist, German, Nietzsche for all that remains what he is: if one believes his work is the symbol of deep aspirations, the aspirations that it expresses remain deep. But is Nietzsche fascist? And even, is he German?

The question is worth posing. In any case, fascism is a fact of human life, but we do not normally think that it takes into its responsibility and its loss an essential part of humanity. Rather we see in it a combination of interests: those of a social class, of a nation isolating itself and of a group of adventurers. It would be different if it were the expression of a philosophy, certainly of a dramatic philosophy, that awakened men to all kinds of life.

If we want to elucidate this essential problem in the meaning of the present war, we must first envision the position that National Socialism adopted.

Generally it limits itself to making an appeal to simple feeling, to an elementary conception of the world: to the extent that there is a National Socialist philosophy, it is that of military patriotism, unaware of what is not its own, scorning whatever cannot make it strong militarily. Of itself, National Socialism refuses to take on a human interest: it is the expression of *German* interest. Its own movement designates it: by destroying it, we destroy nothing universal, we do not suppress an essential part of humanity, but a part that has cut itself off from the human totality.

There is [*the?*] limit of this point of view:

After four years of occupation, we know that National Socialism exceeds the German order on one side. It can appeal, outside of the German interest, to class interest: it is in solidarity, outside the limits of the Reich, with adventurers and owners.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, is recognized by the Nazis as one of the glories of Germany. His philosophy is uncontested: some pleadings are made for isolated passages, but the whole of it is not taken into account by National Socialism. The professors of the Nazi church are Paul de Lagarde and Chamberlain. Nietzsche could not know Chamberlain, but if one wants to measure the distance from Nietzsche to Hitlerism, the contempt Paul de Lagarde inspired in him must be taken into account: on this topic he said . . .

The position of National Socialism in regard to Nietzsche is equivocal: a political position of prudent monopolization, neatly dishonest. The Nazi world cannot, in any case, appropriate that which would save it from chauvinistic populism.

But Nietzsche's position is clear.

In his time, Germany was overtaken by a pre-Hitlerian tendency: anti-Semitic pan-Germanism. *This is the only thing that he set himself violently against.*

Moreover, he said he was a stranger to *all* political parties, refusing in advance the monopolization of whatever side that comes. "Doesn't [my life] make it likely that I should let myself cut my wings for just anyone?"*

But all the anti-Semitic pan-Germanism was the object of an aggressive hostility on his part. He expressed the violence of his feelings in this formula: "Do not frequent anyone who might be implicated in the bald-faced sham of race."** Nietzsche's thought is often vague and contradictory (this is why pacifists and libertarians can cite it—without any more right than the fascists . . .), but it does not vary on this point. Nietzsche was the least patriotic of Germans and the least German of Germans when all is said. He claimed to be Polish, arguing for the Slavic origin of his name. He spoke of the German race with disgusted contempt. (He esteemed the Jews, and had a dominating taste for the manners and mind of the French.)

The truth is that Nietzsche's area of thought is situated beyond the necessary and common concerns that decide politics. The questions that he posed touch on

**Letter to Theodor Fritsch. See note 3 in this section. Trans.*

***See note 4 in this section. Trans.*

tragedy, laughter, suffering, and the enjoyment of suffering, wealth and the freedom of the mind: in general, the extreme states the human mind can reach.

He turned away from the first problems like those of salaries, of political freedom. His doctrine of dangerous life, of lucid, unbound, contemptuous humanity, is foreign to public struggles. It concerns solitaires hostile to the universe. In spite of the theatrical decors, the distance from Hitler to Nietzsche is that of a farmyard to the Alpine peaks. But if he truly wants freedom, isn't it true that the simplest of men designates as a goal and a distant end the free air of the summits?

Thus even the careful position of the Nazis assumes many fallacious commentaries, clever silences, and falsehoods. But nothing is difficult for the Third Reich. They cite the anti-Semitic texts of a despised brother-in-law—despised precisely because of his politics—they isolate sentences introduced in a mocking way . . .

2. *Alfred Rosenberg, Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1932), p. 55. See Bataille, "Nietzsche and the Fascists," in *Visions of Excess*, p. 188. Rosenberg was one of the principle ideologues of the Nazi party. Trans.

3. Letter to Theodor Fritsch, 23 March 1887. Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933) was a virulently anti-Semitic German publisher and writer. His work profoundly influenced the nature and tone of anti-Semitism in Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Trans.

4. See Nietzsche, *Oeuvres Posthumes*. Trans. Bolle (Paris: Mercure de France, 1934), § 858, p. 309.

5. From this sentence to the end, the text reprints Bataille's article "Nietzsche and the Fascists." See *Visions of Excess*, pp. 182–3. Trans.

6. Letter to Theodor Fritsch, 29 March 1887. Trans.

7. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance II*, bk. 4, § 580; *The Will to Power* § 1038. See Memorandum § 250.

8. 1882–1884, *La Volonté de Puissance II*, bk. 4, §§585; XII, pt. 2, § 422. See Memorandum § 268.

9. 1884–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance II*, bk. 4, §§550; XIV, pt. 2, § 168. See Memorandum § 267.

10. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance II*, bk. 4, § 583; XIV, pt. 2, § 157. See Memorandum § 236.

11. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance II*, bk. 3, § 374; XIII § 726. See Memorandum § 241.

12. This third appendix appears as a draft in A (see note 18 to Part Three above). Bataille is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*. Trad. Pierre Sauvageot and René Daumal (A. Maisonneuve, 1944). In addition to those given here, we find the following citations in A:

" . . . contradictions . . . independent of the intellect" (Suzuki*)

*D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 281. Trans.

Suzuki refers to Emerson: "Foremost among these activities . . . are somersaults . . ."*

Fudaishi wrote: "When I pass over the bridge, look! Water does not flow, the bridge flows." (Suzuki**)

13. D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series (*New York: Grove Press, 1961*), pp. 242–3. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. II. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), pp. 29–30. Trans.

14. D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series, p. 245. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. II. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), p. 33. Trans.

15. D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series, p. 245. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. II. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), p. 33. Trans.

16. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. III. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), p. 253. Trans.

17. D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series, p. 243. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. II. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), p. 31. Trans.

18. A: The poetic expression of *satori* is disconcerting and can only disconcert. Jang Tai Nien wrote [. . .]

19. D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series, p. 250. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. II. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), p. 40. Trans.

20. *Bataille* is quoting from D. T. Suzuki, *Essais sur le boudhisme zen*, t. II. Trad. Pierre Sauvegeot and René Daumal (*A. Maisonneuve, 1944*), pp. 203–6. Trans.

21. Response to a critique of Inner Experience published in *Cahiers du Sud* 260–262 (October–December 1943) under the title "A New Mystic" [Reprinted in Jean-Paul Sartre, Critical Essays (Situations 1), trans. Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2010), pp. 219–94].

22. Sartre, "A New Mystic," pp. 276–7. Trans.

23. Sartre, "A New Mystic," pp. 278–82. Trans.

24. Sartre, "A New Mystic," p. 286. Trans.

25. B, in the margin:

It must be shown however that such a facility risks involving Hegelian and existentialist phenomenology.

The only thing: S. had the bad grace to reproach me for being a Christian, returning to essentials—not God—nothing that can tranquilize for an instant, but I cannot be and—I admit, I emphasize my human situation, which is to say my

*D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series, p. 309. Trans.

**D. T. Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism: First Series, p. 272. Trans.

revolt. Man is a fly behind a window and the time that he passes in beating against the window is the most human, being the most rebellious.

Here I would like to add this, my thought even of the fact of the movement that I describe is the most contemptuous that I can imagine, not only for the reader but also for the thought itself hence this appearance of disdain in its expression—which is utterly essential to it.

26. *Bataille*, Inner Experience, p. 103. *Trans.*

27. See Sartre, "A New Mystic," p. 284. *Trans.*

28. *B*: This recognized I could defend my positions and show, defending myself, that a phenomenology is possible, inevitable even, that does not reject external facts. I have spoken [. . .]

29. *B*:

I interrupt myself here to provide definitions of necessary principles.

In my way of proceeding there is an element of play, of perhaps unbearable disorder. One day I will show, precisely when I come out of this vagueness, this incoherence, that I can proceed otherwise. I must however specify for now the meaning that I have given to some difficult words.

For me, *nothingness* [. . .]

30. *B*: [. . .] I would have liked to immediately state what I owe to Surrealism: only the rules to which I hold myself if I write have prevented me from doing so (I could only come back to it later). Whoever is familiar less with the letter than with the spirit [. . .]

b) Notes and drafts from A, D, and M:

[*In D, the following notes and drafts. Some sentences are incomplete.*]

Of Nietzsche, it must be said right away that he put in question the world and himself.

But to question the totality requires the totality of the man who does it.

For a piece of the human puzzle, one question alone can be posed: how is it linked to the form of the ensemble? This figure could be reduced to the position of an enigma, it must be assembled to be perceived—and to pose the enigma.

Nietzsche was born in a world *without men*, composed of artists, professors, businessmen, soldiers, peasants, workers. The different types divide themselves into innumerable specialties. Richard Wagner appeared to him the only one among them, but he was, fundamentally, only a "big ear." The desert of lost friendships remained (O. [*Psyche?*]) little by little the [*illegible*] of youth dissipated. Speaking to _____, Nietzsche appeared desperate that he was not speaking to men other than about narrow questions of religious history.

Nietzsche gave the totality of man a fascinating value.

[*In margin: Goethe, but Goethe himself had the feeling that man insofar as he was in the position of an enigma dissolves.*]

Necessity of first resolving the practical question

It obviously does not suffice not to act in order to be a w.m. [*whole man—Trans.*]

Every other definable goal is assignable in terms of action. If this is the goal, we must lead ourselves this way, so we say.

The whole man in a sense is the free man; in him nothing is subordinated any longer. But it would be an error to say: to reach the totality, we will fight for freedom. Undoubtedly the fight for freedom does not suit those who seek the totality better than most other actions, but the fight for freedom cannot be a vague thing: it must be subordinated to the concrete conditions of politics, leading it ardently we cannot forcefully bring ourselves closer in any way to the totality of being. It is in fact the positive exercise of freedom, not the negative fight against forms of constraint, which will make my life a whole one. The exercise of freedom by its nature eludes the summons of language. We cannot do *anything* to be free. It is only if in order to be free we *no longer have anything to do* that we can be. Possessing freedom leaves us prey to the search for the ungraspable. When we could act [*crossed out*: it's that] we weren't free, we fought only in order to have it.

This is to say that full freedom destroyed

But full freedom has an object—whole or not, man is always an existence with a goal in view. Freedom is not yet what it makes it possible to attain, and what it makes it possible to attain is the extreme point to which man can go. But there stops precisely the sphere of action, method, etc. We rediscover but more rigorously the same difficulty that the partisans of doctrines of grace have put in relief. Salvation, say these partisans, cannot be attained through works. If acting for salvation, this difficulty remained in fact debatable and, by definition, vague. It is otherwise with total existence.

*

Reminiscence intervenes following an enduring desire and a painful privation. It is effectively a response to the desire, to a lack. What else do I have to say? The object of desire, undoubtedly, is communication, which is to say the beyond of the being. Understanding erotic games is instructive. It is in death, undoubtedly, in the radiation prolonging itself for a time in the memory—which follows the real exchange—that desire completes itself. But at the same moment desire remains incomplete, since it is only complete in the act of the abandonment of desire. Fundamentally it is a question of freedom

If I can assign it a project, my go-beyond is pure nonsense. If action is impossible, to say no to what exists, without being able to return this no to the yes of an ulterior action, is definitive nonsense.

But it is this way with all *expenditure*.

Expenditure has this privilege. It constitutes an absence of goal: a hole in the sphere of goals. It cannot be given in terms of goals. I can describe it, uncover its

laws, indicate its importance in human life. It is nonetheless situated outside the possibilities of action. Nothing permits it to be given as a good. Language belongs to the sphere of action and of goals.

Impossible to *speak* of the real movement of expenditure.

If I force myself to describe a movement of expenditure, I betray it in every way. Poetic distortion is necessary, and this paradox dominates: pain expressed literally, extended poetically, is joy. If I had spoken of joy, I would have implicated perspectives that are reassuring and contrary to expenditure, since that which reassures is a limit opposed to expenditure, it is a *good*. If a poem or a tragedy is a *good*, it is as a literary treasure, which is to say as a betrayal.

It may be that my pointless words, flowing along with the songs of the beautiful Ophelia, are lost in insanity. It may be

Forfol, Ouilly, [Fumichon?], Cordebugle, Hope, Wounds

*

Text on the tragedy of understanding

What is most bizarre about a rather mad attitude—wherein one no longer discerns the basis or the coherence of affirmations—is probably insolence saying: in the discordant systems of thought that the history of humanity propose to me there is nothing that reassures me, nothing that stops me. Nothing that restrains in me an immense laughter . . . or the cry of a wounded beast . . .

Not a philosopher, a poet, a scholar, certainly nothing else: my vagrancy, my steps point me toward the summit of human possibilities. Enough of a philosopher, however, enough of a poet, enough of a scholar, to regard from a distance philosophy, poetry, and science, which have nothing to do with the summit, and certainly bar access to it: one cannot reach the region where I am without a certain degree of clownishness. Assuming disgust for philosophy, poetry, and science. Just the same I hoist myself up no less often by my weakness as by my strength—the one and the other appreciable.

At the point at which I am, there is a feeling of loyalty, of solidarity, of kindness, that commits me to my attitude: I have treated and must treat philosophy underhandedly; I have the greatest contempt for philosophy, science, etc. in general for all the local clouds in which we lose ourselves only to avoid the exhausting climb to the summit. I'll place as testimony to this necessary contempt at the end of my book this development: Sir Cerberus, philosopher, I'm certain you will scorn my little ball

*

In these questions, I perceive some meaning, however ironic (but it cannot be, and for the most profound reasons, only in part), in this paradoxical declaration: "I go back to the opinion, in most cases completely arrested, of all of my readers." I define in this way my thought as drawn and quartered. A body can be drawn and quartered, but the operation removes the state of the body. It is not the same with thought: on thought, the operation is more difficult, because the action of centrifugal forces has few places to take hold, but the drawn and quartered state, as horrible as it may be, is not irreconcilable with an exercise in which thought perseveres.

*

[Notes for the preface. In A, pages from April 1944:]

On Nietzsche
(or the Will to chance)
[crossed out: ECCE HOMINES]

Preface

The question: *what to do?*

Is to give chance

to play

It is first of all to accept what is given as a game

The conditions of a difficult fight, to fight on the side on which chance seems to appear

The same thing as freedom

The premises of a kind of equivalent given to theology

Beyond and beside anxiety

Beyond philosophy

Representing undoubtedly its degradation

This beyond *loses itself* in the integrity of life. It is a bridge between particular knowledge and the ensemble. It is no longer pure knowledge: it mocks knowledge, it concerns being.

Outline for the preface.

To write a book on Nietzsche, explain *why*. Centenary.

Due to personal difficulties give up on the project of a notebook

Accrued difficulties: circumstances

Giving birth

Begun from notes on N. in April. The ensemble formed by a Lecture and notes since that lecture

An account of that lecture

Abandon the notes on zen
 Add somewhere an epilogue on zen
 Theopathy and Proust (don't throw myself into this currently)
 Principle of work continues beginning with the lecture that is the height of the impasse, of the impasse at which N. left himself.
 Denounce it; describe it.
 Nothing fixed, not knowing where to go, I went looking.

Beyond, not beside anxiety

[A page entirely crossed out:]
 somewhere

If the summit is evil, one cannot say of it that it is evil in light of a good.

Sovereignty

- a) master
- b) god
- c) the rationality of the *Tierreich*

Only totality and sovereignty essential

Nietzsche's limit: assigning a form to chance—it's necessary to play, to accentuate the share of the future—exaggeration of attachment to the past—impossible to foresee in advance the forms of sovereignty.

Look again at the aphorism on the mean and the extreme

Many contemptuous thoughts have a meaning in relation to the poverty of 1880

Theory of communication: in the preface or better *in an epilogue*.

*

[In D:]

Preface

What to do? Is a Hegelian question (end of history or summit for the summit)

Nietzsche's response

This accounts, first, for Nietzsche's impasse

Second for the fact that we can only get out on the condition of having defined it as an impasse.

Preface

In margin: opposition in Hegel—identity: negativity]

Admit the truth of Hegel: it's the most contrary position, but perhaps, even thereby, the most favorable to the movement of my own thought.

My critique of Hegel bears in particular on the random margin: the fact that the necessity of the results continually leaves a share to randomness.

Randomness, which is to say, anxiety, laughter, mystical states . . . What phenomenology—wrongly but *necessarily*—leaves outside.

The necessary results attained, two hypotheses can be formulated:

—either randomness is suppressed (Kojève's hypothesis) with the necessary suppression of action

—or, on the contrary, the necessity of action falls and randomness finds itself free . . .

Isn't the answer in the opposition of the extremity and the mean?

Curious that Kojève recognized that we came too late. He admits therefore, implicitly, the principle of play.

Note that in Hegel the principle of play appears in the form of negativity in action.

The Kierkegaardian and Nietzschean traditions digesting the Hegelian

To find something beyond pleasure. Nietzsche: power. I found play.

How the movement of history neglects us, we who can represent . . .

Contrary to what N. believed (*Will to Power*, ed. Würzbach, I, bk. 1 § 80), Hegel situated himself beyond good and evil.

Preface

Nietzsche's essential precept is the reunion in one single person of activity leading toward knowledge and the qualities generally excluded from the scholar (the man of knowledge)

Put differently, the suppression of morality is necessary for *extreme* totality.

The same with the union of contradictions

§ 477 is still very crude

Dionysus-Philosopher

Epigram for "The Times" perhaps § 551

Epigram for "teacup" perhaps § 552

To form his individuality cannot be a conscious and systematic goal

Linked propositions

Epigram for the "teacup" § 553, 589

Epigram for the book § 629

There was ancient man, then Christian man, then decomposition

The program of the whole man, alone, is posed in the most tragic conditions.

Preface

Little taste for control, no chance

No humor in certain conditions

What would moderation, the hatred of hubris, tact lead to now

What characterizes N. in his taste for thought is to raise up what was happy—in opposition to Hegel's mechanistic analysis. But chance is not a norm.

Preface. Gay Science § 329
Question of work and leisure

Epigram for preface

Nietzsche is the only possible one to define what has not been attempted, who left humanity aside.

Preface

What N. did not perceive:

Language lives, it cannot remain aristocratic. Accepting to speak is to renounce aristocracy. From the natural fact of language. Aristocracy does not speak.

*

[In M:]

no preliminary result

From end to end, this book is a search for morality made by the totality of man, which is to say:

1. Affirmation of ruin, the whole man
a wall and a zone of silence
2. Affirmation of the right to ruin (the right to signify nothing and to nonknowledge) that is something other than it seems
in that regard: language = lie = action
3. This excludes the value of action but does not thereby signify the value of the whole man—balance of the two points of view.
4. Morality of rebellion or of surpassing
the will to chance is rebellion
rebellion that is not resentment is will to chance
surpassing is impossible without chance
allusion to my lecture on Beyond—incoherence of the whole man—and to the influence of Surrealism
Hence a) the necessity of evil
 b) the necessity of happy surpassing
against' merit—an act that does not surpass the limit is immoral
against the Decalogue and idealism
against God
against resentment
against oppression
for justice

*

In my eyes there is no means of escaping from the *death of the mind* that this book represents: this book defines a place that is groundless. In a sense, the courage and obstinacy that it required of me disconcert me. Nietzsche himself never accepted. His letters on the subject of Zarathustra are an allusion to the abyss from which issued . . . (Cite, at least in *Memorandum*; see Halévy). Of this mental void, he offered neither the external description nor analysis. While my fate stipulated that *despite myself* I slowly draw erosion and ruin. Could I have avoided it? Everything in me wanted it to be this way! I introduce a rigor with a way out. I firmly announce this principle: that which supported human existence, that which ordered it, that which made it possible, is precisely that which led it astray. I place each of us before this dilemma: to live from subterfuges, to make oneself viable with tricks, and to refuse to live so as not to die—or rather: to give free play to a drunken tragedy and to remain inert, silent, like an abandoned house, having long ceased wanting to be . . . a house, accepting giving itself over to the truth of RUIN.

In the end, Nietzsche broke down. What does it matter if it was for external reasons!

I am not breaking down, I'm writing.

I have long asked myself . . .

And now my reasons:

What I am saying, what my book contains, *is not* what a naive reading will find here. My rigor makes me lie. Not that I must change a word: the lie is not my own, it is in the nature of language.

[*In the margin*: Stupidity of language. That which in language makes a figure of loss does this in relation to norms inherent to language.]

Now I must drive myself with the brutality of an Alexander, with epic fury: wanting to untie my Gordian knot, I . . .

1. Around this inert house, breaking down, from this irremediable ruin, I intend to establish a wall and a zone of silence. On this side of the wall is finally defined an absurd region, wherein no one will be permitted to enter without laughter and *without being mad*.

2. Life is a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*

I agree and add: this sentence alone expresses life fully enough, magnifies it and sets it free. Anyone who makes his song signify this, controls it and is only a slave.

3. The fundamental right of man is to *signify nothing*. This is the opposite of nihilism, it is meaning that mutilates and fragments. This right to have no meaning is however the most misunderstood, the most overtly trampled over. To the extent that reason extends its realm, the share of *nonsense*, I mean of positive nonsense, has been reduced. The man-fragment is at present the only man whose rights are recognized. The right of the whole man is stated here for the first time.**

*William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act V, scene 5, ln. 26–28. Trans.

**Note by Bataille: I mean formally. The painting and poetry of our times affirm precisely for themselves this right to *signify nothing*. It is also good to affirm this in a general and formal way.

4. *Reason is perhaps only limited by itself.* Only a realm of pure nonsense escapes it. All unreasonable signification is evidently justifiable by reason. This amounts to saying that the realm of action is entirely justifiable by reason. Action cannot tolerate disorder, injustice, or nonsense. Disorder, nonsense, or injustice introduced into action harms the whole man and for this reason is condemnable.

5. However, the foundation of a morality of the whole man cannot be given in the value of the whole man or in that of action. The whole man challenges values for himself: he cannot have value in his own eyes as long as he is whole, the value of the whole can only exist at the moment when it divides itself in order to act. Undoubtedly—*fundamentally*—action refers to the value of the whole man but, reciprocally, for the whole man, action is the preliminary value, the condition of existence.

6. Morality is a fact. A morality deduced or didactically taught is a derision of morality. Morality is the nonacceptance by man of his given condition. It is therefore just as easily linked to action expressing refusal, as to the whole man who refuses: the whole man can refuse himself and divide himself (in order to act) rather than accept his condition.

7. Morality is rebellion. The given codes establish propriety.

8. not denouncing is the measure of the refusal
in this way, morality is play, surpassing

*

[*An illegible sentence*] And then even it will remain essentially an act of individ. exp. performed dangerously, implying the risk of loss, of madness. Playing with randomness.

And now?

I account for myself clearly.

The project that I put in writing, this book, was a frightful challenge.
Could I have succeeded? Really?

It is apparently a failure; this book resembles tanks abandoned in their essence and through combat, half destroyed in the field.

It is immobile, mute, vain testimony to impotent efforts. In advance it had no other outlet than ruin.

In its regard, I will repeat what Macbeth said of life: a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*

*

For the preface to *On Nietzsche*:

Have I said that the subject of this book was a moral search?

*In English in the original. Trans.

Have I eliminated the idea of art for art's sake? (Art cannot be an end without defining itself as something other than art.) If art is taken as an end, it is aestheticism, the refusal of play, the renunciation of the real. This is why the idea is so contemptible though nothing can be opposed to it.

[*In the margin*: that my whole book is a *quest* for the Grail]

My effort is moral. Detached from bonds of action, to reach the free air.

Having written *On Nietzsche*, having made this violent effort to be bogged down rather than . . .

I am FREE, let it be heard, a free man

And also quite free of action, but what an extraordinary effort it took to detach myself, not by moving but by dancing, from the foolishness that sticks to

*

Dissatisfaction in regard to every accessible goal changed into a dance—including the dance of the bears!

It is permitted, to those who are committed (stuck in it, released) to paths not normally traveled, to speak of them like those by which one attains

Memorandum

Fautrier*

Political brochure under the signature of the madman of Arras

Tragedy** lectures

articles

*

[*In D:*]

[*In the margin*: define the different moral questions intended

this book in which I told of my disappointment at having nothing to do in this world]

The object of the present book is morality. But one won't find a morality created in it, only a morality that creates itself, that seeks itself, places itself from the beginning in front of the worst difficulties.

*In 1945, the Librairie Auguste Blaizot published a second edition of Bataille's Madame Edwardsa with illustrations by Jean Fautrier; in 1947, it published the first edition of Bataille's L'Alleluiah, Catéchisme de Dianus, also with illustrations by Fautrier. L'Alleluiah, Catéchisme de Dianus appears in English in Guilty, pages 133–50. Trans.

**Possibly a reference to "Le Prince Pierre" (Prince Pierre), a play Bataille began writing in 1943. A first draft of the play was titled "La Divinité du Rire, tragédie" (The Divinity of Laughter, a tragedy). See Bataille, Oeuvres Complètes, vol. 4, pp. 319–24. Trans.

In a sense, in relation to books of morality, this book differs inasmuch as real life does from a hall of justice, in assuming judges kill, etc.

Just as medicine begins with pathology

Pathology and vivisection

This in prolongation of Nietzsche's writings given that they are of the same order as my book and my book has the goal of emphasizing that they are.

The inconveniences of this method

Whatever the coherence may be . . . I laugh at knowing, *I want to live.*

Comparable to a battle unleashed

Always in disorder

The necessity of seeing what has happened after the fact.

The epilogue is a narrative of the battle, made after the fact.

The necessity of situating on a descriptive philosophical level

The share of waste

The limited character of description

Leave until later (?) a philosophical elaboration situating these facts as interferences.

*

[Various notes—in A, the last pages:]

Cut the song of the night?

Hatred of those who believe in God—*Zarathustra*, “Upon the Blessed Isles”

The earth: condemnation of Christianity

Affirmation of the pleasures of this world

*

Nietzsche saying create and play—I want (opposed to *I must*), not I play

However, he wanted the creator to be a newborn child (*Zarathustra*, prologue to the [first part?]) and in the second part “Upon the Blessed Isles”)

Moreover, *Zarathustra must be disavowed*

*

[Page out of place in M:]*

Summary of the doctrine

Primacy of the future

Man [*bridge?*] not goal

*These appear to be notes for Memorandum. Trans.

Plunge his roots into evil
 the whole man
 but extreme
 profound doubt
 put in question
 interrogation in the form of a “yes,” which is to say of chance in play
 see the end of *The Will to Power*
 not to have a Bible
 all that exists is perishable—no substance

Nietzsche
Memorandum
 maxims collected and commentary by
 or
 collection of maxims commented upon by

*

Whoever needs something other than a puppet is not part of this community.
 § II: to play: to put oneself in play, to surpass the given in the play, the
 content: only what is favorable to the game.

Perhaps also § on the mad philosopher
 § III: community? Or IV or III, mystic?

*

The three fundamental aspects
 Immanent ecstasy (Nietzsche Proust Zen
 The Stake)

Aspects summarized
 chance
 The idea of time will

This to the benefit of the whole man (preface)
 Of a rigorous community—proceeding by contestation
 In the epilogue, definition of the word transcendence, refer back to the bottom
 of the page on the Summit

*

Nothingness is not where we assign it.
 Voluntary evocation is of a precarious efficacy.
 It is precisely because we do not assign it that our will is not annihilating,
 because we do not assign nothingness, if we do not assign it, it is through impotence.

Transcendence is a game received *from outside*.

For the large development in the epilogues:

Transcendence is defined in relation to the closed being.

The game to realize is: to maintain the closed being, to draw from its exaltation—from its closure to extremity—precisely the opposite, its infinite openness.

This is the “negation of the negation” completed in a “movement of majesty.”

*

I call nothingness that which—in the region near to me—is perceived as no longer being me, as in ceasing to be me, and in the same mode as that which—in the region near to a being similar to me—is perceived as ceasing to be that being.

[*In the margin*: the nothingness of time]

The significative forms of nothingness are, in this sense, an excrement, a cadaver. The experience of nothingness that we have in front of these objects leads moreover to the experience of time destroying being. But, precisely, it does not happen without weakening from reducing this experience to its abstract facts.

Sacrifice was the means by which we were able to offer ourselves this experience under conditions of our choosing. In sacrifice, we took on the role of time destroying being. We assumed responsibility for the crime (in Christian sacrifice, however, we hid ourselves as much as we could from the responsibility, we no longer killed other than despite ourselves).

But in the sacrifice that essentially represents the *voluntary evocation of nothingness*, we found the conditions of transcendence. Sacrifice not only permits us to have access to nothingness but it makes it available for the purpose of a delimitation of *transcendence*.

Transcendence is beyond the being perceived through the laceration of nothingness.

The being thus perceived as born of nothingness partly participates in nothingness, but in another part pushes it away (nothingness is repulsion).

If there is no clear laceration of nothingness, it is immanence.

There is an immanent nothingness.

Immanence does not suppress nothingness but only the transcendence of nothingness.

*

[*In D, marked*: Used Notes]

- I. Simple evocation.
- II. My resolution from last year.
- III. My doubts, my failure.
- IV. Play and anxiety opposed to the *thun*.

further on waiting and time

*

Transcendence is the play *received from outside*

Nothingness is not where we assign it

But that of Proust but it is precisely because we do not assign it
that our will is not annihilating

If there were no tempting matter, which is to say resistance, play would be nothing.

*

Mr. Nietzsche

[*In the margin:* suppress the sonnet*]

my meditations from the brown notebook + my method
chance

freedom and concern for the future

Proust and the absence of ancient communication

definition of transcendence

return to the theme at the end

existence cannot be at once autonomous and viable.

principle of autonomy, of self-loss

*

My work with myself,
body to body with evil,
the most exhausting
Desire for beautiful, made-up women opposed to love
as being to nothingness

*See above Part Three, note 13. Trans.

Some maxims

In anxiety, submitting to the attraction of nothingness
 Love the anxiety that you have been given
 Anxiety proposes an enigma to you
 Like a storm above a town, your will raises itself above nothingness
 This will assumes the deep depression above which . . .

*

the annihilating will and the conscious will to nothingness (deep identity).

Possibility of linking in part, a conscious will to nothingness; in part a theopathic will to immanence on the level of contemplation.

The beauty, the made-up brightness, trollop, cow, frivolity in its silent form, laughter the completed figure of nothingness

Epilogue: I don't mean nothingness in the absence of being sense, in the strong sense, but the experience that a being in particular makes of its absence (make reference notes).

*

Realities

Nietzsche: a puppet, [*illegible*] of threads is the P.G.

All the figures of a wagon, the puns they draw from language, the grimaces, the irony, the malignity (the suburban punks), the frizzy brown hair, the eyebrows Empyrean, storm, pride [*sovereign?*]
 The ghost: cadaver with a king's crown

A beautiful whore (made up well) elegant, thin—in a corner showing her ass. Paid and silent.

Convulsion.

The majestic God is me.

My divinity comes from your grimaces.

The stupidity: the lady with the dog: it's a miniature.

The only outlet: acting, denying nothingness.

*

Summit

The essence of value is what balances the being's concern.

But we only *speak* about it after the fact.

If we speak after the fact, we can only relate this value to some interest of the being.

Speech intervening, determination intervening, what we consider as good must have two aspects.

First, putting in balance.

Second, the permanent interest of the being.

We seek the coincidence of the two.

That which brings balance and risks [*harm?*] is defined as the good.

Not knowing how to balance is essentially what is evil.

Not to consider links with others and with nature in balancing one's interests is evil.

In this last case, communication is at stake.

The relationship between play and balance.

Is the game itself the value, or is it the reason for the game?

But isn't the reason for the game the same as the game?

Note that games of chance demand a necessary destruction from individuals.

Look for texts.

Time and the galaxy opposed to the solar system.

The two forms of time, concern for the future and reduction of concern for the future in play.

Nietzsche and mystic experience.

Complicity in laughter.

In part, the will to evil (confused with will to power).

In part, transcendence.

Relationship between communication and pleasure.

What I call *summit* is in any case a state, if I envision it without being it, this can only have a relationship deprived of meaning with what it is. However it is a reserve within the values of decline. I admit the values of decline; I do not expend myself, immediately without measure, but subordinate them; I play the part of something else.

Nietzsche weak, slipping into madness, sinking
texts on periodic states

Concerns for strength in relation to reaching the state of expenditure have two aspects: 1. the means of acquiring the strength, which can be evil.

Another aspect of moral aspiration: the beneficial inversion of the aspiration toward evil. Horror of the summit, itself a summit.

The purity of the idea, of the must be.

*

The surpassing of nothingness (its *Aufhebung*) assumes indifference, familiarity with nothingness.

*

Summit (Preamble)

Envision somewhere the relationship between:

- a) interferences between summit and decline
- b) moral idealism
which is to say between decline and the idea

*

Summit

No matter what pleasure fundamentally responds to moral aspiration

It's a question of intensity

It's precisely the moral ruin of prostitutes who . . .

*

introduce in the text the difference between open

and closed

*

A task beyond merit.

"To disavow merit: but to do that which is above all praise, indeed
above all understanding."

(1885–1886, *The Will to Power* § 913)

It seems to me that in every morality appears—on the second level—this necessity of play, which is to say of the guaranteed ruin of each being. It's the exciting element of every morality.

develop the principle

without thinking of anything to seek that which surpasses every possibility
beginning with the being to raise it up without measure

However the case of sexuality is conducive to putting a contrary element
into evidence

merit

the good of the being

Surpassing in relation to communication, in relation to pleasure, in relation
to the being, constitutes the essence of the summit, the essence of morality

Development in § 2: 1) the summit—basis of all morality
2) opposition to the summit in morality: relationship
to the being

*

One task in particular imposes itself on us:
 To show action toward the summit through diverse moralities of decline.
 Devotion to others
 to the city
 to a cause
 to God
make a summary

*

[In D, a group of notes for the Epilogue:]

End of The Times

My definitions (of time, chance . . .) touch on limits within which we move.

End of The Times

Beyond the concept—Plato situated the concept outside of time, but Hegel said: “time is being itself.” If I consider surpassing, exuberance in time, I must

Epilogue (preamble)

No longer a morality but a hypermorality.

Morality is, in the best sense of the word, a coincidence of utility with being and of the surpassing of the being (of the taboo and of a transgression of the taboo). If one presumes utility, one does not for all that have the responsibility to be useful.

A hypermorality is the position of a value independent of utility.

Epilogue

Passage from transcendence to immanence

It assumes sexual freedom, the perception of the nothingness of desire as a non-danger.

In the epilogue, put aside the idea of an immanent God

In the preface, a dialectical outline of the opposition between transcendence and immanence

Full immanence assumes the absence of asceticism, sexual and moral cynicism

All defined beings are only one undefined being. That one imagines the tiresome repetition, as much as to say infinite, of flies, from the first birth to the final death, each adding to the other only an intimate perspective in every way similar to the other save in . . .

? defined beings are opposed to undefined nature, but they are only fully opposed on the condition of collecting in themselves the essence of the undefined being.

Epilogue

Final §: identity of the object and the subject

Immanence does not signify God

Suppression of transcendence = surpassing of the isolation
individual cancelation of nothingness.

Epilogue

No means of determining a moral value precisely and certainly no means of determining it generally.

- 1) no true value without desire
- 2) necessity of play, which is to say of *not knowing*.

Epilogue

If value is a game.

It is what will result from every presentation.

A moral end could *have value* even if one admits that it is the expression of decline, to the extent that it does not have the being as an end but the being at play.

Think of the epilogue saying this and in the same movement what the presentation—or in the first part?

Obviously the equivocation will persist, a moral end must be given for a being.

It can be said that play is the interest of the being.

In this it is rightly nothing.

Interest is on the side of conservation.

Play is contrary to interest, but it always borrows the voice of interest.

Perhaps in an appendix, definition of terms

interest	pain	anxiety
pleasure	summit	
play	decline	
value	communication	
good	desire	
morality	being	

In the epilogue formulate a general morality of play.

The summit must be left its stormy crown.

On the level of decline, take the part of play.

Accumulate in order to expend.

Cite here texts by N. on expenditure.

Only the surpassing of this point of view will count on the level of the summit.

kindness toward myself contrary to the brutality of the summit, on the one hand, to the demand of the “you must” on the other.

There is a relationship between the “master morality” and “summit morality” on the one hand, and on the other between “slave morality” and “morality of decline.”

However:

- a) Nietzsche's opposition has the advantage of not developing the analysis to the end, reserving human attitudes in both parts
- b) Nietzsche confused—at least tended to confuse—“mastery morality” and the “morality of the whole man”; he envisioned the “whole man” insofar as it was necessary to carry his totality to the extremity; he conjectured attitudes that would be appropriate to his position, relating them systematically to those of the master, who, like the slave, is only a fragment of man, a military command.
- c) He justified in part this confusion by sketching—more in his life than in his maxims (look for a note on this in the file for the preface)—the idea of a moral behavior founded on chance.

*

[D, another group of notes:]

Remaining to be covered (Preface or Epilogue):

- Relationship between master morality and the summit
- Relationship between hypermorality and necessary existence of the idea
- Not to betray one's friend under torture (note already made)
- Community without goal.
- Difference between a philosopher and a whole man.
- Relationship, in Hegel (etc.), of the concept and time.
- Solidarity of men among themselves (at the lowest level).
- Deform rather than pass beside.
- Strict difference between Jesus and N. (contradictions)
- Penetration of the body and excretion.
- Experience as authority.
- Identity of the object and the subject.
- Kindness to self.
- Contempt for philosophers.

Epilogue

- Definitions touching on the limits within which we move.
- Set aside the idea of an immanent God.
- Formulate a morality of expenditure and of the open being.
- Mystic states.

Preface

- Practical character on the side of play
- The whole movement of phenomenology

Being drawn and quartered
Complex nature of the question
What can a community do

This fact of existence itself must result from a real activity
the extreme whole man
and
the average whole man
situated in relation to the profane and the sacred
so the extremity is transcendent
no—difference precisely in the way this extreme
profane-sacred, this is only the classical situation
extreme-average, is something else

[In the margin: how could the beloved differ from this empty freedom? From this infinite transparency of what no longer has the burden of having a meaning?]

Revision of the diary

Impression of déjà vu and immanence defined in relation to one another, relation between déjà vu and (defective) sobs

To destroy transcendence is fundamentally to question nothingness, the interrogation begins in some way in transcendence. By destroying the impression of nothingness, transcendence arranges the next immanence.

Immanence does not suppress nothingness but only the transcendence of nothingness.

What kind of immanence or transcendence do lovers attain that lacerates them while uniting them?

MORAL VALUE IS THE OBJECT OF DESIRE

On this topic I am speaking of "undefined existence"

Desire is sometimes for a defined object, sometimes

Opposition God, beloved (transcendent, defined)

Opposition God, beloved (transcendent),
to nothingness feminine nakedness

In principle they would have: transcendence: defined beings
immanence: undefined beings

Revision

Revised
Importance for Proust of evil: in the form of horror (first volume of *Time Regained*)

the need to add a note in the tea part

Essential: the position of a more in the object of immanence

(equality between *play* and *more* though immanence is play itself)

(equally between *par* and *mon* though *mon* is the being that suffering plays without reserve)

the being that suffering plays without reserve,
the desirable is undoubtedly essentially the *more*.

essential: the magnificence of the universe regained in the absence of misfortune of the beloved

- the universe appears impoverished in relation to the beloved
- the universe is not in play

but the beloved is only the universe for one single person

The undefined being of children in which we participate, from which today we are free. This “being” that once sang the counting rhyme *Pomme de reinette et pomme d'api*, I heard today sing it again. That is its continuity.

The sovereignty of desire, of anxiety, of pleasure.

Revision

Man denies nature near him,* the given that he surpasses, from which he defines himself by surpassing it, it is this given, from which he has come out and in the face of which he lives.

As for the whole, conceiving of it would be to reduce it to the given; this is not the end by which we could account for it.

I don't know if I have to go back to it

freedom conceived as impotence

in relation to the appropriateness of the subject to the object, the object considered as product.

For *one person* play is risk of loss or gain but for the ensemble it is to surpass the given

definition of *desire*

c)

Part Four Philosophical Epilogue

I

I've finished this book. Overcome, like those beginning murderers, still poorly assured of their intentions, I can only sit down and ask myself, returning to myself bit by bit: “What have I done?”

“Who am I?”

My life . . .

How can it be that a life isolates itself so profoundly, in a point? There is nothing in me, however . . . but common life. Speaking, it seems to me, is vain: language betrays me. I sense what I should have said: words fail the lucid murderer as much as they do the dying victim . . .

No misunderstanding is too great. I compare myself to a murderer: I am only like a murderer in my isolation. My book is not a crime in any way. It was done badly . . .

*See above Part Three, “April–June 1944,” note 53. Trans.

I recopy wearily (comically? Bitterly?) these sentences from Nietzsche: "The highest tragic motives have remained unused up till now: poets know nothing through experience of the one hundred tragedies of the man who applies himself to understanding."*—"I have always put all of my life into my writings, all of my personality, I don't know what could be purely intellectual problems."**—"You only know these things in the state of thoughts, but your thoughts are not lived experiences within you, they are only echoes of the thoughts of others, thus your room shakes when a truck passes. But me, I am on the truck, I am often the truck itself!"***

Men have the habit of expressing thought from the outside. Decidedly, I cannot. My life has made a pit of my thought. I could say: from the depths of the pit . . . I don't want to, that would be a lie. At the center of the agitation, thought is a pit without depth.

I'd say to anyone: "Follow your own ideas. Ignore me." I have a number of followers for whom foolishness is my infinite teaching.

I've taken great liberties, it seems to me, with the laws of thought.

If I were a *thinker*, I would have elaborated with care a coherent and original construction, but, mistaking myself for my thought, I was free (I could sink in the same way as all thinkers together and make a hole in place of a house).

It may however be that my attitude rests on an empty audacity (others could say: "a hole undermines the base that is the ground, substitutes the void for the sky: no one has yet sought this depth.")

And as I have taken the deliberate trouble of *leveling as many chances as possible against myself*, I will try, if it's possible, to forget the preceding.

If my thought were not the movement of separation that I think it is, if it were not, as it seems to me, a hole that hollows itself out, what kind of house would it build?

I don't want to hide: here is the plan of the house.

II

In any case, I have to define my use of terms. I have spoken of being, of nothingness, of immanence, and of transcendence—in a bare sense that is not given. I must explain myself, and the explanation that I will develop must be a coherent construction.

*1881–1886, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 305. See Memorandum § 32. *Trans.*

**1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 312; XI, pt. 2, § 590. See Memorandum § 245. *Trans.*

***1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 313; XI, pt. 2, § 592. See Memorandum § 249. *Trans.*

I limited myself*—this is not a metaphysical perspective—to this use of the expressions *a being* or *beings*.

Assuming movements (communications, exchanges) through which given elements pass, I call *being* (*a being*) a movement closing on itself, uniting limited elements.

Unity is the essential attribute of a being; and the possibility of naming it—of clearly distinguishing it—is decisive.

Small numbers of elements can be acquired or lost without the ensemble ceasing to have a definite unity.

Not being a *pathway*, a simple element (an electron) cannot, in my sense, be regarded as *a being*. An electron is deprived of *ipseity* (*this* electron cannot be distinguished from that one). Similarly, elements formed by a relatively small number of simple elements (atoms, molecules) cannot be considered as beings in that we cannot name *this atom* or *that molecule*.

By contrast, a micelle, a cell, an animal, a colony or animal society, a human society are beings.

In the realm of plants, a determination of beings is often difficult and lacks interest.

[*Crossed out:* I repeat, I am not defining a metaphysics. I know nothing about the beings of which I speak if they answer to a metaphysical definition of being; they are not opposed to phenomena by a fundamental nature. A pathway is itself a phenomena.]

My way of seeing does not oppose these beings to non-being. I envision a *being* or *some beings* and define them. But there also exist *undefined beings* (that which does not form a defined unity is obviously not non-being).

Hegel granted being to the intimate meaning of realities, like a star, the solar system, which answer to my definition. But on this point I have no intention of following Hegel or even opposing him. Ignorance about what a star, a solar system (or a galaxy) *is* seems to be a fundamental ignorance. In the same way, man knows nothing about what a stone or, in general, any piece of matter whatsoever *is*.

Only beings close to us—animals—can be related—strictly speaking—to metaphysical concepts founded on intimate experience. If the comparison is less easy—as in the case of societies—a notion derived from the intimate experience of man is embarrassing.

I can however observe this.

We commonly attribute being to the intimate meaning of large animals like dogs, cows, with which we have being-to-being communications not entirely different from human-to-human communications. And since we grant intimacy to cows, we cannot refuse it to ants. If we grant it to ants we cannot refuse it to, etc.

I maintain my definition, but I must say that it is not a corollary to any certainty.

[*Crossed out:* Wanting to get away from this imprecision, I've turned my back on ways of seeing that begin with the human experience of *I exist* as a foundation.

In this I'm holding myself to a formal notion of beings.

*First draft.

For all that, I won't disencumber myself from the intimate unity of which I have experience. I must situate this experience in the formal order about which I am speaking. But I no longer ground the notion of *a being* on it.

On the metaphysical level, this reversal has these consequences.

The *self* is no longer a foundation but a result.

My considerations on being are limited by those that I make on a closed pathway. I lose the possibility of taking myself for more: I perceive the precariousness of being in myself, not classical precariousness founded on the necessity of dying but a new, more profound precariousness founded on the *slight chance* I had of *being born*.

I can now situate *myself* rather well.

I grasp myself, insofar as I am made, as suspended] [See below.]

These first remarks situate my intentions in opposition to those who found their thought on the experience of the *I exist* as on an irreducible fact.

No more than any other can I avoid the *I exist*, but it seems necessary to me, before drawing consequences from it, to examine its *conditions*, in relation to diverse facts of experience about it.

The preceding is related in general to the sense of the expression *a being* but introduces at the same time the following reflections in which the *I exist* is decomposed through the examination of complex conditions.

This movement is the reunion of diverse elements founded on an *expiration* from which I can consider it by name.

Considering my "conception"—the expiration from which *I exist* (*I exist*, which is to say my being not only exists but is nominally distinct)—I perceive the *precariousness* of being in me. Not the classical precariousness founded on the *necessity* of dying, but a new, more profound precariousness founded on the *slight chance* that I had of existing (that there was for me to be born and not some other).

Now I have been made: death could not suppress this determination of *me* that is opposed to all others.

I grasped myself, as created, as suspended above an infinity of possibilities that I am effectively not: *a throw of the dice having canceled the infinity of possible expirations*. [Crossed out: However, of this cancelation—which does not differ from myself—I can bear the weight (*that I am*). And being *only a closed pathway, this pathway*, I aspire to play in *open pathways*. (Here, definition of open pathways—)]

On this point of *cancellation*, I think I will never lose myself very far in the direction of reflections that lead me astray. Of this self that I am, I can affirm that it did not have in other words any chance of existing. What I am assumes the encounter not only of my parents but also of the sperm and the ovum from which I was born. Had other gametes in the course of the parental conjunction met, the child who would have been born would not have been *me* but would have been distinguished as clearly as a brother or a sister. And even admitting a very contestable clarity of facts, the multiplicity of possible combinations, all different, in this play, this particular combination that I am had only a chance of being

produced, against more than 225 trillion contrary chances.* I must not extend my reflection to the births of my father, my mother, and those of their fathers, their mothers, and so on endlessly . . .

Assuming there hasn't been any intermarriage with cousins, accounting for ancestors of only one thousand years prior to myself, I can account for no fewer than two billion. These numbers have only one meaning: limiting the outcome however one wishes—at least without giving up on all filiation of the known type—commits the mind to the perspective of countless dice throws.**

What was at stake in these dice throws touches upon the difference *for me* that separates any occurrence whatsoever from this one that I am. *In itself*, this difference is insignificant, but there is a point of view *for me* that defines it as fundamental. Even this *self* that *I am* is at first the same thing as this point of view. It detaches itself with a discontinuity cut off from everything that is not it. The *determination* of the self is the *negation* of what it is not. The position of the self defines the not-self as negative, as pure nothingness. This pure nothingness surrounds me in every way. It is the past before my birth. And as present, it is that which would be if, as was infinitely probable, *I had not been born*. But certainly, as life is in its movement aimed at the future, it is what will be when I am dead. In the same way as a swinging bell necessarily emits a certain sound, the *self*, as expiration of an infinite precariousness, is defined as the entrance into the shadow of that which is not precisely the day that rises in it.

This precarious *self*, obviously, cannot have a lucid consciousness of the limits that its birth brings into this world. And similarly there is no lucid consciousness of the complex movement in the course of which beings recognized as similar emerge from the nothingness that it has defined. At the end of a short period, this *self* is at once the *discontinuity* that detaches it from the rest of the world and the *continuity* that attaches it to that world. Tardily lucid consciousness analyzes these experiences: it only does so in possession of an understanding drawn from several sources. The continuity of beings is undoubtedly found in the attitude of the child who does not deduce existence from others but through communication has fundamental understanding of it: it knows its fellow beings by *laughing!* We recover this laughable notion in several ways, but we only recover it in its plenitude if it obstructs us, introducing difficulty, the fall into the night, which causes laughter.

This *self* that from the beginning defines itself as cut off discontinuity and as such takes itself *seriously*—necessarily—must recognize one day or another—after its infinite precariousness—that it *is not* this discontinuity that it thought it was and that determined the area of nothingness. Undoubtedly, there might *in fact exist* only unities distinct one from another, such that the separation is perfect. I can

*Note from Bataille: Every man, writes Jean Rostand, has 225 trillions possible brothers (*Les Chromosomes*, p. 121). Obviously, this fact assumes true the hypothesis that sees, in the different combinations of chromosomes in each gamete, a foundation for the differences between individuals. But 1) this hypothesis is difficult to refute; 2) even if it is the case, as an ensemble the perspectives that I have established, modified, would sufficiently remain.

**Here the first draft differs from our text. See note below for continuation of the first draft.

nevertheless state this proposition: if the ovum from which I was born were united with some other sperm (each emission for a ovum includes hundreds of thousands), *I* would not exist; however a being would be born that would have been neither another, nor myself, but partly myself and partly another. Similarly, the egg (the union of the two gametes in a cell) from which I am the result could have been segmented, giving birth to twins in place of a single child. In this case, *I* would have been *two*. However, I can also say that neither one nor the other of the two would have been me. The difference between one twin and the other (from the same egg) is of a sticky nature: Mark Twain said of a twin brother that one could not be distinguished from him: to such a degree, he said, that, "if one of us drowned, you would never know if it was my brother or me."^{*} The truth is that between A, the simple egg, and A'A" the same egg segmented, giving birth to twins, there is a continuum. Before the segmentation, A alone existed: and similarly after the segmentation, there is exists nothing more than A' and A". But one can only say that A *died* by doubling itself. There is between A on the one hand and A'A" on the other a *moment of continuity*. This case is not exceptional: each time that there is scissiparity, the mother cell died in a certain sense but in another sense survives in the two cells to which the scissiparity gives birth: the mother cell is distinct from each of the daughter cells; but the *moment of continuity* that is the process of scissiparity creates a bridge between one and the others . . .

It is essential to insist on the fact that, in principle, sexual reproduction introduces on the contrary between beings cut off discontinuity. But this mode of reproduction itself in the final analysis is reducible to scissiparity:^{**} I then therefore willfully grasp *between all beings* the chain of *moments of continuity* that is impossible to break. And in this way I do not grasp it in its abstract conception but in moments of comical subversion. Mark Twain's remark is expressly laughable. And the same idea of a being that is half me, half another personally makes me laugh.

The laughter through which I grasp this continuum is not distinct from sympathy. The beings about which I laugh, which in an immediate process of contagion I understand to be similar to me are my close relations (my friends). The obstacle between them and me is denied when I laugh. The nothingness (the fall of being) through which my understanding has passed is undoubtedly a point of departure for laughter, it is the depression without which I would have known nothing of its moment of bursting out, but it resolutely effaces this nothingness into which I fell. It does not maintain the nothingness, but the breath escapes such that, in laughter, the link that I perceive from my fellow being to myself is that of *immanence*. This immanence undoubtedly was disturbed by the fall, and the obstacle encountered in the movement animates it and enlightens it, but it is nonetheless the equality of life with itself. Nothingness dissolves in it and is not maintained

^{*}See "Method of Meditation," in Bataille, Inner Experience, p. 170. Trans.

^{**}Note from Bataille: The fact that the process of scissiparity of the cells of the *germen* takes place following a division of pairs of chromosomes at the birth of two different elements does not suppress, between A, A', and A", the *moment of continuity*, elevating its radical nature to the *ipseal difference*, offering [from?] nature on the contrary to *individual difference*.

between the object and me as an abyss defining the *transcendence* of the object. In order to find, to define transcendent objects, I must first dissociate laughter and love in myself: this dissociation carried itself out in the understanding of death, in the opposition of bodies and souls.

This notion of *continuum* that substitutes itself for that of the *precarious self* itself submits to the contestation of death. I understand myself first as *self* then as similar to *others*; but the others die. Just as I grasped the continuum of life before my close relations, the corpse of one of them reveals the lie to me. The death of others recalls for me a fundamental precariousness; it defines me as irreplaceable. And just as the feeling of the continuum assured in me the effusion of laughter, its rupture left me in tears.

At this moment the dissociation takes place, the intimate wrenching, limiting from divergent directions. In a kind of a death, a body then assumes the emptiness of nothingness, but this is no longer pure nothingness, it is nothingness represented by an object. This transcendent object—as the emanation of nothingness—is in part horrible, which is to say hateful. But the hatred that follows it is only a corollary of love, of the feeling of the continuum. This duplicity of feelings commands multiple disjunctions. Fear assures on one side the maintenance of the attitude of attachment. The absence of fear on the contrary gives free rein to the desire for distance. In fear, the survivor undergoes in himself the profound alteration of the feeling of the continuum. It remains linked, but the object of the link is no longer the close living relation, it is a repugnant corpse: love in these conditions detaches itself for a part of the ease of laughter and commits itself in a new way in which the object can only be attained *beyond* a tragic rupture of the continuum. The fact that the corpse cannot in any way respond to laughter, but arrests it and in this arrest lets a feeling of fear grow, also commits laughter—immediate communication—in a new direction. If the corpse does not laugh, being on the contrary the obstacle to laughter, the point at which the continuum of laughter recovers itself must be found elsewhere, *beyond* the encountered object. The renewal of the initial laughter then implies two conditions: first, the encounter of a third or of a living third, with which the continuum will restore itself; second, the lifting of the fear inspired by death. Lifting fear, excluding love, this new kind of laughter demands the indifferent character of its object. Hence this profound division starting with the death of beloved objects about which we can laugh and laughable objects that we do not love. This division within laughter also implies in general nature attenuated from the alteration produced by death. It is not that one laughs at the corpse in principle but from the behavior of others who shatter the continuum between themselves and us.

Essentially that which in this experience of death separates itself from the continuum of life is the body. It separates itself from the continuum of life initially if death takes place. But the corruptibility of the body, which death reveals to the end, completely, and in the way that it poses itself interrupts the continuum

[First draft. See note above:]

We don't normally hesitate to say: *If I had been born one hundred years earlier . . .* This common way of speaking, in opposition to the preceding remarks, is situated in opposition to two notions, the *precarious self* (in the fundamental sense of the word precarious) and the *necessary self* (one accepted from the outside, the other rising immediately from lived experience).

The self given in *lived experience* is an entity independent from time and from the expiration that serves as the foundation for ideas of the soul, of metempsychosis, of immortality. It is a being-atom, indestructible and not fallen: it is not the result of an expiration that could not be. Lived (immediate) experience is foreign to a notion like "I could not exist": it does not totally detach the existence of the world, at least of human life, and that of the self. It is balanced by the *later* precariousness of the self given in the disappearance of dead others and in the fear of one's own death. This kind of restricted precariousness accepted from the outside and doubted is however integrated in all lived experience. It is not the same as the *fundamental precariousness* from which we *distinctly* grasp lived experience through concerted speculations.

We have a great deal of difficulty in realizing the meaning this precarious existence has for us. If I attach myself to myself closely—opposing myself to a being born from other gametes or from another wife of my father—I sense the abrupt difference. If I envision things seen by *others*, they are negligible. At least I can imagine this case: that a being born of other gametes had appreciably the same body, the same tastes, the same gifts (it's imaginable), nothing had been changed for my friends. I can say to myself: I know Pierre and Edouard L. (twins from the same egg). If I see one of them, I don't know if it is one or the other. What exactly does this signify: assuming that it had been necessary at the birth to sacrifice one of them, I put myself in the place of the survivor who says to himself: "If in the place of Edouard, they had sacrificed me, Pierre, I would be *Edouard*, I would be named *Pierre* . . ." Mark Twain spoke of a twin brother whom no one could ever distinguish from him: "To such a degree," he said, "that if one of us drowned, you would never know if it was my brother or me."*

One sees, on this subject, that clear individuality demands sexual reproduction.

Two different seeds are clearly distinct one from the other. The difference between two cuttings taken from the same branch on the contrary leaves room for intermediary possibilities. Given A and B, one could cut the branches in such a way that one of the cuttings was composed of the better half of A and from the lesser half of B and which, being neither A nor B, would be half A, half B. By situating differently the cuts one multiplies the possibilities. As elsewhere the different plants issued from several cuttings coming from the same trunk do not reveal any differences between them, there is a tendency to offer several plants as a single individual.

The perspectives offered by scissiparity are much more misleading. A cell A reproducing itself substitutes two cells A' and A" of which I can say that each of them

*Again, see "Method of Meditation," in Bataille, Inner Experience, p. 170. Trans.

is different from A. This A however is not *dead*: it survives in the species of A' and A" but only survives as divided. There has not been a death in the sense in which we normally understand the cessation of life. The *life* of A continues in A' and A" but not its *being*. Insofar as it was a *being*, A could not be separated, distinguished from its *unity*, which no longer exists. But then between the two twins, as similar to one another as they are, I could not introduce the possibility of any *slippage*, I grasp the *slippage* from A to A' or from A to A" and consequentially of A' and A". If Pierre did not differ more from Edouard than A' from A", he could say to himself: "I could have been Pierre alone, without Edouard," but at the same moment he would perceive that then he would be no less Edouard than Pierre, that he would in a certain sense be both of them. Reciprocally, each being, born alone, could say: "I could have at a certain point divided myself, in place of Jacques, who I am, there could be Pierre and Edouard, twins. I could be, but . . . up to a certain point . . ."

If not for sexual reproduction, I could think of myself as a being who was only half me, who would *only be half* another. But in another sense, I could think of myself as *doubled*. It is not certain that sexuality wholly changes things.

The differences from brother to brother are reducible to differences between one gamete and another. The difference between one gamete and another can be that which separates A' from A". If I call A and B the two gametes, male and female, from which I am born, I can think of two twins, even from distinct eggs, proceeding from a substitution through scissiparity of A' and of A" to A, from B' and from B" to B.* In this case, I can say of myself: "In place of the self that I am, there would have been X and Z twins. I would undoubtedly exist, but *double*." Indeed, reciprocally, the twins born in these conditions could imagine a being who would be half each of them, being one and the other in one alone. There are therefore real cases in which the dice are shaken between two possibilities such that the difference between them would not correspond to the difference wholly defined at the outset.

[*Crossed out*: In fact, asexual reproduction reduced to the exception this *continuity* of beings. However I now understand]

[*Crossed out*: If I now return to the perspective that I am trying to suggest, I see:

- 1) Thoroughly complete differences between diverse beings, making each of them into discontinuous entities through a precariousness so great that one might dream of it;
- 2) In opposition to this first aspect, the perspective of the continuity of beings;
- 3) In interference, a hybrid notion founding a necessary idea of entities on the actual discontinuity (with exceptions) of beings, on the one hand, and on the other, on their fundamental continuity.

These three perspectives raise this:

- 1) The precariousness of beings in fact defines that which constitutes us in a fundamental way;

**Note from Bataille*: The case of twins from the same egg is in short the realization of one half of these conditions.

2) It's true: this precariousness is founded on an absurdity, the notion of discontinuous beings. Fundamentally, being is in a certain sense continuous. But we constitute ourselves through the renunciation of continuity, from the fact that we admit the absurdity of discontinuity, into the depths of which we have fallen.

What is touched moreover by absurdity is not precariousness but the discontinuous entity. Absurdity would have the role of diminishing the precariousness]

[*Crossed out:* The continuity of beings, the fact that all beings fundamentally are only one is only the fundamental fact from which we tear ourselves when closing ourselves.

In closing ourselves off we create a transcendence. (nothingness)

but we in fact open ourselves

we form a closed pathway open beyond the proper being that we are
the bath of immanence establishes us]

If I now return to these views—that the examination of the facts of my “conception” opens—I can discern the relationship that they present with the diverse aspects of experience of the *self* that I have lived.

They are opposed, first off, to this fact of lived experience that is the being-atom, irreducible, indivisible . . . But this particular fact is perhaps complex, and the method that I have followed permits me to reach elementary facts.

Seeing this ensemble of fortuitous conditions, without which I would not exist, I grasped what would have been, if the least of these conditions were missing, *as entirely other than me*. I discerned in myself clearly an element of decisive importance, which was that I am *myself* and not *another*. I saw at the same time that this importance comes in some way from all my weight. There is a fundamental difference between the other and me. This difference is that which my experience normally makes real in the face of others, but I can only extend—and this is essential—it to the possibilities that do not fail. I regarded myself in this way as a entity distinct not only from all others that have existed, are, or will be, but from those that could have existed starting with the same variants in the chain of linkages. I grasped at the same time that it was in this way that I must define what I call *myself*. I could only bear all my weight on the fundamental affirmation of my being: *me is me*, and nothing other, all that, real or possible, is not *me*, is separated from me by an incommensurable abyss.

This lived fact implies that: if I am myself and nothing other, beings like me are discontinuous entities, such as could exclude the possibility of a being that would be neither exactly me, nor exactly another, but something hybrid. Or better, if one raises oneself above these depths in order to see a vaster scene, from two things one, *either beings are discontinuous entities, or being is continuous through these apparently discontinuous entities that we are*.

We have a rather clear, intimate understanding of the discontinuity of the *self*, but what is remarkable is that the considerations made about it setting out from facts derived from the outside, even though they are essentially clarifying and provide clear and distinct consciousness, tend, nevertheless, to introduce if not a doubt at least a fundamental disorder. This is that we can clearly grasp the

discontinuity of the *self*, without ambiguity at the very moment when the external considerations emphasize its importance. But if we fix our attention on it, we cause a new experience: our clear sense of it dissipates, the feeling that cunningly insinuates itself in us is from then on contrary to that of continuity—"It does not matter in the end, we think, that this streaming of being, the ensemble of which does not depend on this series of fortuitous events, carries itself out, falls into one or the other of these anxieties enclosed on themselves that say *I* and no longer have the strength to get out of the anxiety and of the *I*." Even if I admit that a difference in gametes is sufficient to bring another and not me into this world, I cannot give any meaning to this difference. If this *X* had existed, there would not have been a real *me* in relation to which I now define this *X* as another. In a sense, *X* and *me* return to the same.

I can willingly introduce this consideration and this feeling (I cannot even avoid it), this does not suppress the fact that the existence of the *self* remains gripped in these narrow conditions, but it throws a kind of suspicion on this dependency: this dependency is nonsense trailed like a ball at one's feet. Pursuing as I have the test of my conditions, if I perceive in it a fault opening a perspective of continuity, I cannot fail to perceive in my consciousness a living response to this fact: I am made of the same wood as all the others. Differences of character separate me from them: I am more irritable, more sensual where this other is bitter, etc. but fundamentally all beings are only one.

[The following drafts were found elsewhere in Bataille's papers:]

From this extreme test of my conditions of existence, I draw results that seem contradictory.

Initially, I grasped the *self*, insofar as it is *a being* like [crossed out: an entity that separates from others a cut off discontinuity] a being that might not have existed. I perceived my presence in the world as having depended on an infinity of fortuitous events, such that a negligible change in this infinite series would suffice for the multitude of human beings not to include any that are *me*.

In this way I became attached to the inevitable definition of the being that I am: such that one's being oneself and not another is of some (undeniable) importance and represents a difference in relation to other possibilities.

It goes without saying that my father and my mother, as in the song, "never saw," this world lacking the particularity that I am. But the question demands to be posed as to whether this world that does not exist—wherein I do not exist—would be, if it existed, completely different from the one—wherein I exist—or simply different by a degree: a difference analogous to those that separate heat—a little more, a little less—heaviness—a little more, a little less—or those present between phenomena separated by a threshold, like water and ice.

In the first place, what imposed itself on me was a sharp difference. Other perspectives appeared only after a detour. I must recognize however that if the difference of degrees were first apparent to me, I would have been disconcerted, I think, and I would undoubtedly have given up.

*

1. I initially perceived an ensemble of fortuitous conditions without which I would not have existed. That which would have existed if the least of these conditions had been missing would have been entirely different from me.

From this first perspective, I have grasped in the mode of lived experience a decisive significance in regard to me being me and not another. But this significance is bound to a notion (which in principle does not disturb the fact of sexual reproduction), according to which there could only have been me or another, to the exclusion of a being who would not be entirely me or entirely another but something in between. In other words, my way of being me is linked to the idea of a fundamental discontinuity of separated beings.

Discontinuity in fact exists

*

A being is a closed pathway.

This engages in that direction.

Each being is suspended over the infinite possibility that it had of not being.

It perceives an ensemble of possibilities not occurring as possibilities for existence other than it.

It bases itself on the fact that a twin himself is entirely other than his brother, between one and the other, there is an abyss that separates being from nothingness.

Second perspective: regarding things from close up, this discontinuity is apparent: there is a possible slippage from one being to another.

In fact, these two perspectives exist simultaneously and return from one to the other, one discontinuous and the other continuous.

From the discontinuous perspective, nothingness surrounds the being and the being discovers the remains of that which he seems to be as transcendent; this is the tragic conception of the being.

From the continuous perspective, there is immanence, pure immanence slips not toward nothingness but toward less being (that which I have called the nothingness within is only less being).

*

Assuming that the essential and universal demand extends to the point of putting in play everything that is, this play cannot in any way take place

Assuming that between being and play there has been no difference, the whole could not exist, since it cannot put itself into play.

The being in play would not be carried out other than by dividing itself, or rather it could not exist other than in division itself.

To the extent that the continuity of the being would reappear, nothingness would be established.

But reciprocally, the separated being annihilates itself

Total play would take place

Pessimism is the dizziness of the game. It does not count since the game takes place despite it, that we voluntarily throw ourselves toward the fire, the impossible. Which does not in any case justify optimism. Effectively we are going toward the impossible.

But what else have I done other than write this to define *desire*

*

Discontinuity itself is precarious even though it is the condition of being.

It is precarious first in that continuity remains as a foundation for beings.

But its precariousness is carried out when it establishes a sphere of immanence around a central core.

That said, the epilogue can end. Like the rest of the book, it is a work of friendship.

*

[*Then these notes and outlines:*]

Universal as particularity surpassing the continuum	the SOUL defined in the comical exclusion of the opposition of the <i>body, animal sensuality</i> Naturally there are beautiful bodies, etc.
Continuum of the bodies maintaining the particularity that will deny the humble soul	The process is slow, multiple, it puts in question not only the festival, the entire society of the festival: war, the formation of social classes and their struggle, work
God introduced nothingness into the soul	The synthesis is the HUMBLE SOUL (or the unhappy Consciousness: transcendent God, which results in the immanence of the Soul accepting humility and God)
Inversion occurs through the introduction of nothingness in the soul from which the mind is born	This immanence defines the MIND* in the spiritual sense in opposition to the material sense
	MIND is only completely defined at the end of this process; poses its limit: matter, things which include

* "Esprit" can mean both spirit and mind, here and throughout. Trans.

Universal
pure

Bodies, but only as empty negation, as absence of mind
MIND taking matter as object is critical thought

*

[Crossed out:]

CRITICAL THOUGHT

in fact

is put at risk in

POETRY (Holocaust of language rediscovering all the non-empty elements of nothingness in the crucible of the festival before their segregation]

[Crossed out: Critical] Thought having matter as object does not result in appropriateness
Leads to what can be reduced to it in the world

Spiritual transcendence is no longer possible but the gap between reality and words is ultimately expressed concretely by a voluntary gap in words

Poetry poses the [outlet? immanence?] of irrational nothingness which causes the waste of all the preceding operations

which collects in particular the contribution of the comical

but poetry is a pure nothingness
the I of critical thought

*

```

graph LR
    Soul[Soul] --- Body[Body] -- "inversion of relations" --> [humble soul  
God]
    humble_soul[humble soul  
God] --> [mind  
things  
critical thought]
    
    ChasteMind[Chaste mind] --- Obscoena[Obscoena] --> [rejected sexual union  
chastity  
divinization of virginity]
    rejected_union[rejected sexual union  
chastity  
divinization of virginity] --> [morality  
sexual morality  
morbidity]
    
    Marriage[Marriage] --- Fornication[Fornication] --> [rejected sexual union  
chastity  
divinization of virginity]
  
```

*

Continuum (rather more from a smile than from laughter)

Corpse of a close relation = nothingness-object

Transcendence of tears = sacred, third part of a continuum

The sacred is something separated, assuring the third part of the continuum, it's the rupture of the continuum become the condition of the new continuum

Beginning there, the continuum is established through the negation of the continuum, a kind of continuum in question, continually denied, only encountering itself in a movement of voluntary negation, seismic continuum, convulsive, swooning, continuum of tears. It's a complete absence of rest, a state of elementary trance. It's the continuum of the festival with its two directions, the included and the excluded

tragedy

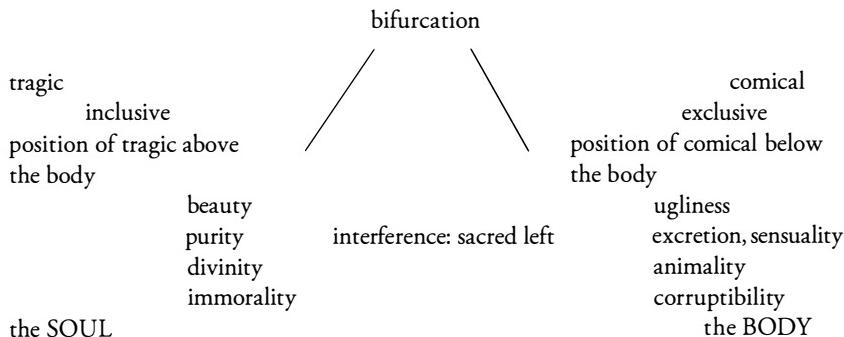
comedy

The object of the continuum actively denied

This continuum in trances is in reality a process of separation and classification

*

Anxiety	discontinuous ipse
Nothingness questions ipse	nothingness of not-self—object not posed Continuum of close relations: laughter or rather innocent smile
Calm continuum	Corpse puts the continuum
Corpse, object = nothingness	in question but the
Continuum of tears	continuum subsists as such only it is in question
crucible of the festival	continuum in trances, in question (that's the festival) it proceeds from an active negation that is at the same time a process of segregation the body is defined as the domain of nothingness served to nothingness, as such separated from being



*

ipse
nothingness, anxiety
continuum ([*innocent?*] laughter) of close relations

continuum
corpse of close relation
separation of tears
transcendence of positive tears
of beauty and courage
negation of death

Soul: negating beauty of death

the negation of death as waste

Body: corpse of an enemy, of a sacrificial victim, excretion, animality, corruptibility

a) sacred, divinity, Olympian gods

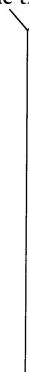
b) laughable waste

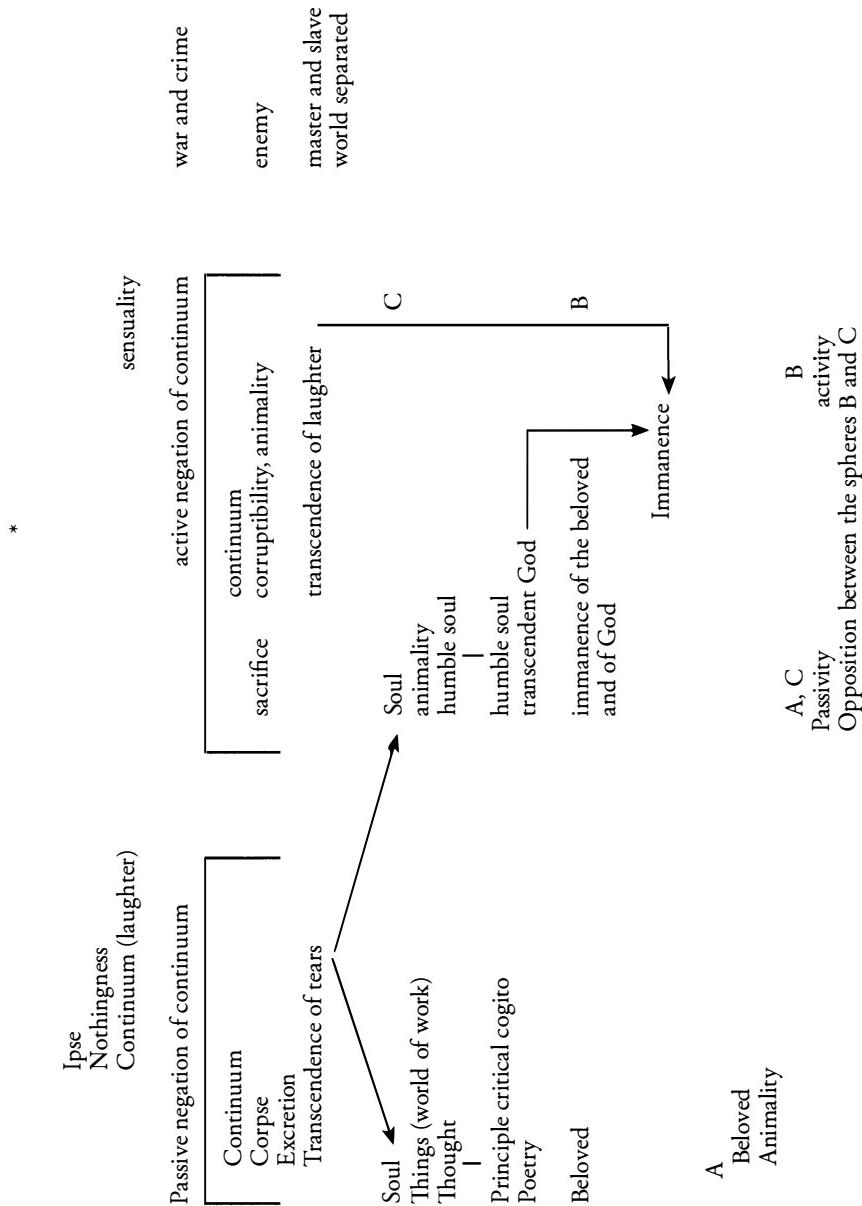
middle term of a continuum
somewhere between the three

b) soul of an unfortunate slave
animality
humble soul

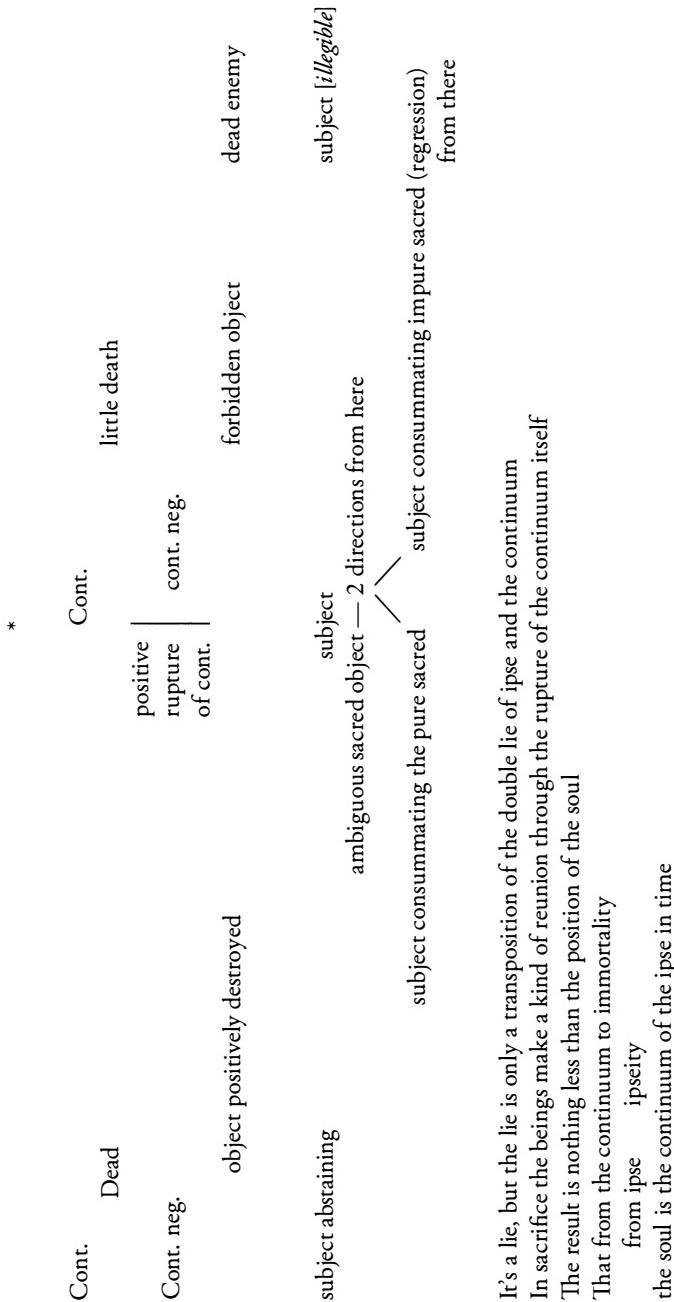
humble soul
transcendent God
imm. of the beautiful soul and of God

critical thought
poetry
beloved
lie

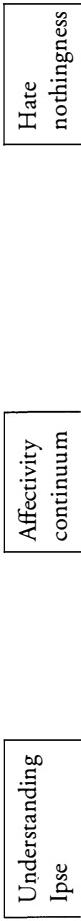




Continuum	Continuum in belief	sub.	cont.	cont. negative I abstaining
Death	. death	obj.	death	obj. destroyed positively
cont. neg.	cont. neg. voluntary loss <i>position of lost object</i>			
Object destroyed	It becomes positive			
I stop in front of the destroyed object	in front of this object the <i>I</i> of the continuum			
taboo of dest. obj.	that lost the pure continuum responds			
I consummate the object destroyed				
transgression				
subject	a) cont.	c) cont. neg. of self	e) subject abstaining, posing the negation defining itself through negation	g) subject having been consumed
object	b) dead	d) object dest. positively	f) object as sacred but carrying within itself	the subject having been consumed is an immortal soul



Immanence



A *Ipse*

Nothingness

Continuum

B *Continuum*

Death

continuum

little death

continuum in
(at this level, the
sacred is double)
trances that
destroy the self

Sacred positive

destruction

Immortal soul

pure sex act
(marriage)

Marriage

obscoena

chaste soul

mother

charity

misery

human

D (inversion is
here synthesis)

God

E union of the

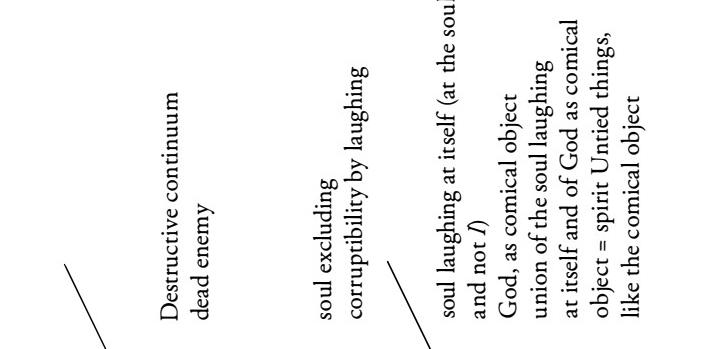
pure soul

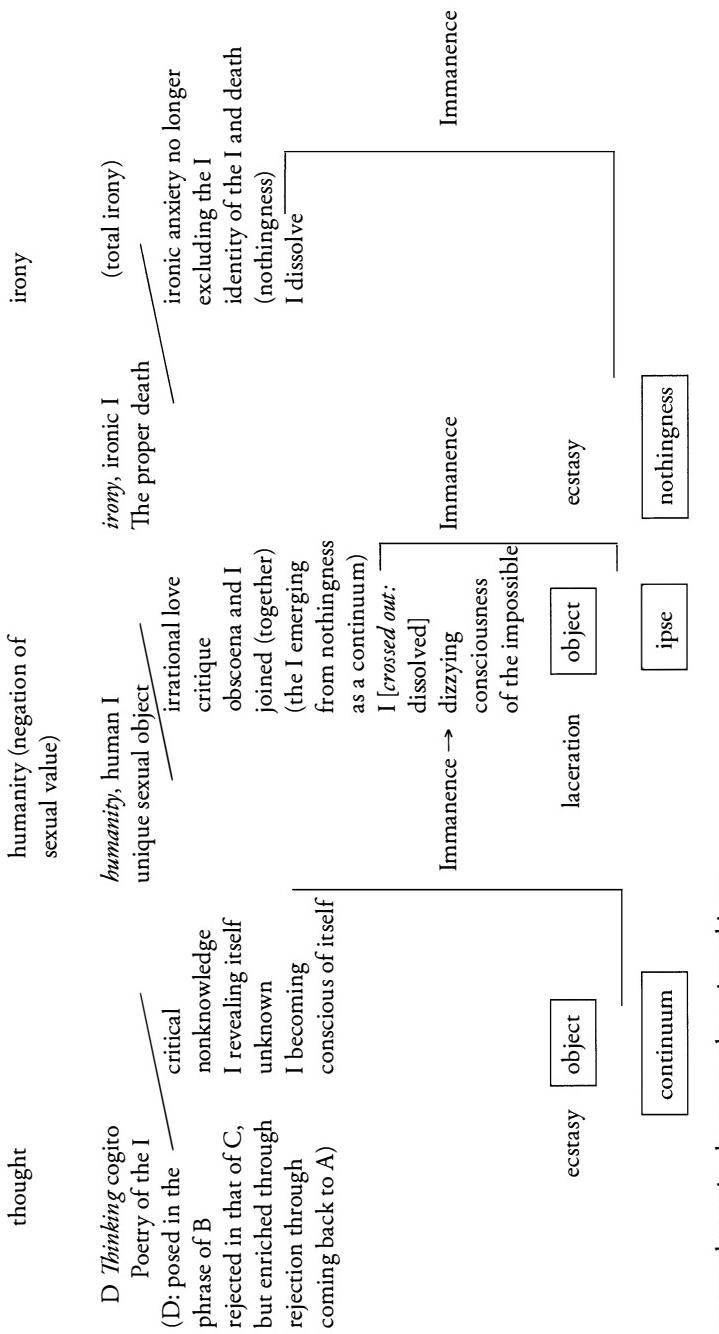
and God, spirit

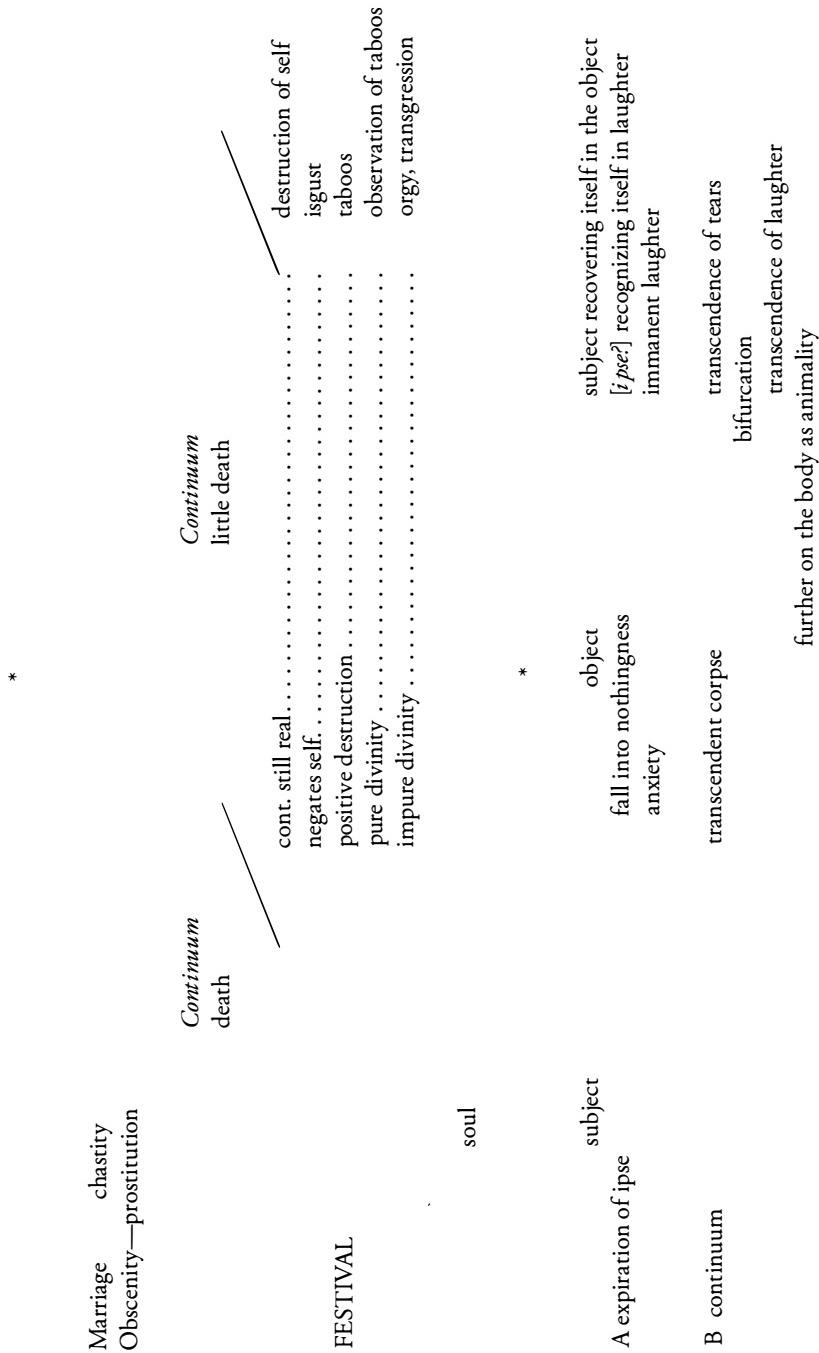
F Things

(man-thing,
his misery)

*

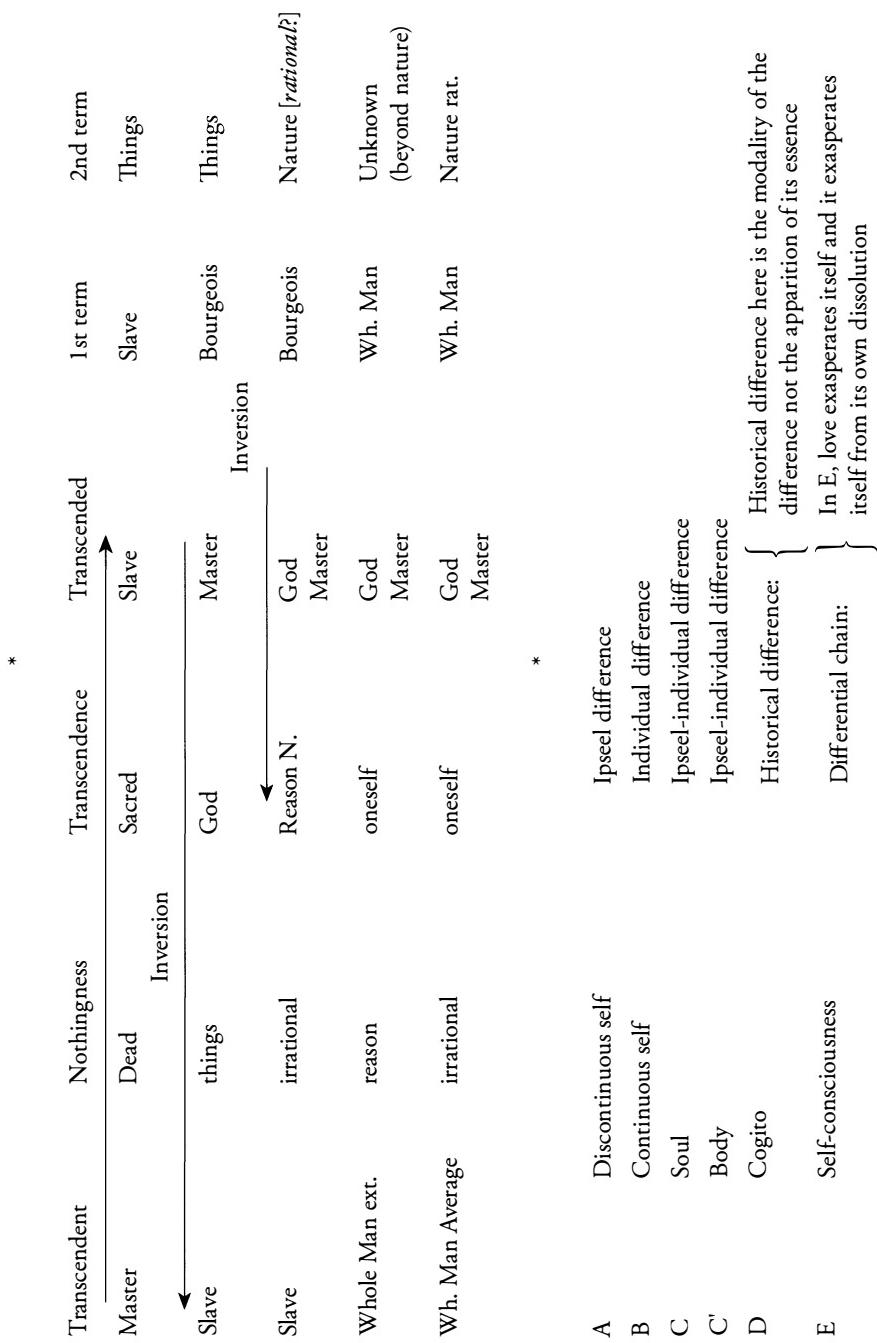






		the soul [<i>illegible</i>] in the body
C	pure transcendence Incorrputible soul Sacred, beauty	1) the body its animality excretion sexuality
	Equivalence with the master	2) things matter
D	humble soul	God (nonknowledge)
	E critical thought	Poetry as region of prismatic decomposition fall into the beloved as [<i>animal?</i> <i>universal?</i>]
		God humble soul animality pure soul corpse continuum nothingness ipse
		LIE
		immanence

		*		
A	particular	ipse nothingness	ipse nothingness	
B	univ.	{ continuum (social) continuum dead soul}	sexual union (undifferentiated) on the level of free continuum intercursus interruption of sexual continuum	
C	particular	{ soul body}	waste marriage, sexual dignity, clothing sexual dignity clothing obscenity	
D	univ.	{ thought, logic}	platonic love platonic love platonic love	
		thought, logic poetry analytic of self (as ipse)	at least one does not propose immediate sexuality	
				Not the ipse but the continuum that creates the 1st experience of the sexual object? It does this in the mode of B? In reality, here appear, from the outset, taboos a) rules b) incest there is a taboo on the corpse in the same way



Memorandum

This collection of writings by Nietzsche, assembled and presented by Bataille, appeared in the spring of 1945 through Éditions Gallimard. As is clear from the source list, provided by Bataille, the writings include aphorisms as well as excerpts from Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and notes excerpted from La Volonté de Puissance. Many of these selections represent truncated maxims drawn by Bataille from longer aphorisms, chapters, or notes; see notes to the text below. For additional contextual information, see the Translator's Introduction.

In Bataille's papers, one finds:

[Box 9, G:]

– 42 pages of citations from Nietzsche and from volume 2 of Charles Andler's multivolume biography of Nietzsche, Nietzsche: Sa Vie et Sa Pensée: vol. 2, La Jeunesse de Nietzsche jusqu'à le Rupture avec Bayreuth (*Editions Brossard, 1921*);

– 5 small pages constituting the manuscript of the pages 225–226.

[Box 14, P:]

– 80 pages of citations;

– 30 pages of “notes for a preface.” These are the notes that we present below:

The sound of confused voices rises toward me from all of the past. But nothing ever reaches me with this intimate touch, which bothers me intimately, makes me laugh. Nothing calls to me addressing itself to me saying: If I was not heard, the highest hope

*

Who can live at the crest of waves?

The crest of waves, moreover, assuming that one can reach it, ends up in the dust of sea foam: nothing in its burst that is not the horror of the imperishable and the refusal of not sinking.

*

To hear the sorcery of the world and to respond to it.

We don't have to move from one point to another but to dance.

*

From the sound of confused voices rising toward me from all of the past, nothing ever reaches me in this intimate, shattering way, nothing calls, addressing itself to me in this way: “If I were not heard, this that does not want to die, would die.” Not hearing Nietzsche’s voice, the earth would not seem to me completely

the earth: it resounded, this voice, perhaps as a laceration, a kind of strange joy, inhuman, foreign to man, to my ears rather the cry of a newborn, detached from the past, detached strangely from the mother . . .

I did not initially understand that I was *myself* deaf to this voice that I loved. Nor did I imagine that one could be generally deaf to it. It took me some time to recognize the excessive deafness of man, which obligates a cry to prolong itself in insanity. An amplifier dissimulates it, apparently offering guarantees: so many commentaries, newspapers, studies . . . but [*and then?*] the indifferent void in the end . . . “Whoever knows the reader will henceforth do nothing for the reader. Another century of readers and the mind itself will stink.”* This truth, this bad news from Zarathustra, dominates me, overpowers me . . . I myself have friends, readers. I can’t think of them without grinding my teeth, I hate them (I’m *ashamed* of them). Whoever *reads* me, now, must understand that he is responsible, among others, for a moral depression that is more than dismaying. A Christian knows how to read, to exhaust the consequences of words: he lingered over a narrative of the crucifixion, without letting even the sound of a drop of blood be lost.

For this decadence of moral solitude it is difficult to offer a remedy. It pleases me however to order this book expressly toward this end. The deafness to Nietzsche’s appeal is more shocking, since that appeal is the most perfect of all; I mean the least conscious. Reading Nietzsche is easy, but only apparently: it is normally a euphoric, even exalted, *flight*. It poses the problem of communication in a painful way: Nietzsche endured martyrdom increased by the fact

*

Authentic morality is only ever found *against* those who *teach it*.

*

Like a face accusing its features by aging
After the silence has fallen what will remain of Nietzsche’s face

*

Preface

Don’t go from one point to another but dance

1st section

Refusal of praise, solitude, and masks

2nd section

Dissatisfaction

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On Reading and Writing*. Trans.

Innocence (linked to the death of God?)

Now that it is no longer an audacity, the lack of meaning of preaching

This doesn't work, everything is on another level

At the limit where meaning is lost

No preaching possible: it dissolves once it doesn't derail

. . . more than one among you will fall over at a single roll of my drums . . .

how is it that someone can be disappointed?

Words that are situated where everything is lost, where man and God himself stray from themselves

*

a kind of I won't let you rest

The part that we give to the whole man is that which we give to art, if we read Hamlet, etc., if we suppress in ourselves the propagandistic movement that pursues [*that rots?*] the will to act

The one who would go to the end of the possible

To explore human possibility to its extremity

	Refusal of praise	1st Refusal of praise
	Dionysian destruction	passage from the Night Song
	Absence of goal (contradiction of	
Insatisfaction	whole man)	insatisfaction with anything
	future	everything destroys itself
	play	
	expenditure	future
	friendship	expenditure
Politics		
Festival		
Mysticism: to live problems		
	gaiety	
	laughter	
	absence of goal	

*

Through morality the individual is instructed to be a function of the herd and only to attribute value to himself as a function.

Freedom assumes, if not the individual, at least life as not necessary as a value. It assumes therefore that one place one's life *at stake* (it is not necessary) on the individual level. It is the non-membership in the system.

Hence the feeling of cold, of the death of God, of infinite surpassing (without which we would fall)

The crucial moment of autonomy

*

[*In margin:* method of cooperation with others]

Ahead of politics

The smallest fatigue in the play of intelligence intercepts the comprehension of N.

Thus the concern with relating to the known.

N. himself showed the origin of understanding as relationship to the known

The movement of N.'s thought is a relationship to the unknown, to the non-created.

All concern for a goal, etc. . . . is foreign to him

one must drown oneself

without returning to firm land.

*

Acéphale, 3rd year, new series, no 4 (?)

Not Nietzsche's thought but
the accordance of this thought
with a reality that enters into
movement

Heading, preface from H.H.

Essentially a utilization of N.
for currently given ends. Precisely
this utilization explication of real
thought.

God is dead

What we can affirm is that as
we are what this memorandum
represents, we are Nietzscheans

Eternal Return

The overman must exist

Live Z. p. 11*

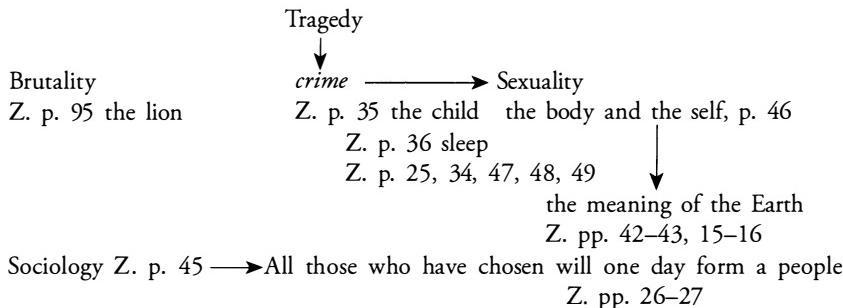
Essential relationship between the overman

The earth and the self Z. p. 47

Wars and revolutions miserable means

The last man Z. p. 17

*Page numbers in this section are from Bataille's notes. Trans.



*

[Finally this outline—for On Nietzsche?]

1. *Extremity without action*

2. *Inverse of politics*

Political Nietzscheanism is absurdity itself. Strictly speaking nostalgia for the past. National Socialist world so poorly made that its margins will be large
 Temptation to substitute the egoistic will to power for the good
 It's superficial—just like the justification for life
 The will to power is a pact with evil

3. *Method of the book*

Report on ridiculous experiences; the pasty side of a life that is not carried away by action.

Written, moreover, as the world labors. Writing this preface calculated to be at the dawn of a new world. Describe it. Post-revolutionary problems that are not posed for me, but I am a precursor.

Poor terminology, etc.

4. *Non-viability of the whole man*

Paradox. Non-viability is a fact of the whole man. What N. sought. The fragment, hence the man who knew what he had to do. To know what to do is to reduce it to the state of a fragment.

Action (action in the Hegelian sense of succession) divides man in time and consequently in space.

The totality is that which is not compelled to a *necessary* task, to a goal, it's freedom.

5. *The average whole man*

The average whole man perhaps does not need to exist, but the totality of humankind, the completion of history.

However no average whole man without extremity.

6. *Extreme whole man*

The whole man can be reduced to pleasure but a beyond pleasure is necessary

It's risk

Risk poses the question of extremity

Extremity is the summit at which a complete absence of fatigue engages insubordination completely (the autonomy of the festival?). Thus total laughter, excluding its practical elements. This necessarily touches on madness.

The second part is the expression of a long and horrible lived experience.

7. *Result beyond pleasure*

Beyond pleasure, power?

No: play.

[*In margin*: I reach this point by chance some days]

Nietzsche said create, not play. In immanence, everything would be *undergone*. There would no longer be a will to act (to be powerful) but a pact with the possible through a happy movement of access toward the inaccessible (in place of the will to power and even of the will as a whole)

Necessary community

8. *Conditions encountered in play—the existence of communism*

Disappearance of the herd animal. It's different now.

Russian communism and Marxism

Coincidence: critique of bourgeois liberalism and of the French revolution

Relationship of [*thought?*] and modes of production.

Nostalgic character of N. in relation to the past.

In contrast, salvation in the future identical to the salvation of the world of necessity in that of freedom.

9. *Internal transcendence*

Here give a definition of the word

Internal transcendence is a core in which play would be consumed. (Contradictory character of immanence and risk. Play assumes transcendence. In fact I attained immanence in play and resulting from play.)

Maintenance of the facts from § 1 (immanence = *where all degrees cease*, I have my roof . . .) which is to say if not from the impossibility of acting at least from the absence of fundamental equilibrium, but this absence of equilibrium would take on a meaning.

From now on, it is useless to resist, not to turn back: only beyond.

The war left me cold.

I only want to *create*, to play.

The fragmentary state is enslavement, the whole man rebels against it.

In the general equilibrium a point must exist . . . Impossibility of giving order to the disequilibrium.

Notes to the text. Herein I only occasionally specify Bataille's modifications to Nietzsche's text. Very often Bataille excerpts a maxim from a longer paragraph in the source text. In the following notes, "selection modified" indicates modifications more substantial than excerpt. Additional modifications are also occasionally noted to provide a sense of Bataille's approach to the editorial process in assembling this text. Trans.

1. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 1, On Reading and Writing.*
2. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 3, The Seven Seals (Or: the Yes and Amen Song).*
3. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 2, The Child with the Mirror.*
4. The Gay Science § 248.
5. 1882–84, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 4, § 629; XII, pt. 2, § 97.*
6. Beyond Good and Evil § 278. *English translation by Walter Kaufmann in The Basic Writings of Nietzsche (New York: Random House, 1968).*
7. Beyond Good and Evil § 290.
8. Beyond Good and Evil § 289. *Selection modified. Trans.*
9. 1882–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 3, § 372; XIV, pt. 2, § 71.*
10. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 4, The Drunken Song § 8. Selection modified.*
11. 1881–1886, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra, trans. Betz, p. 302.*
12. The Gay Science, *Preface to 2nd Edition, § 1. Selection modified.*
13. Beyond Good and Evil § 99.
14. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 4, The Higher Men § 7.*
15. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 2, The Night Song. Selection modified.*
16. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 2, The Night Song. Selection modified.*
17. Beyond Good and Evil § 285.
18. The Gay Science § 125.
19. The Gay Science § 343. *Selection modified. Trans.*
20. Beyond Good and Evil § 55.
21. The Gay Science § 108.
22. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 2, Upon the Blessed Isles.*
23. The Gay Science § 285.
24. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 1, On the Gift-Giving Virtue, § 3.*
25. The Gay Science § 124.
26. The Gay Science § 347.
27. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 4, Retired.*
28. The Gay Science § 357.
29. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance *II, bk. 3 § 420; XII, pt. 1, § 344.*
30. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 3, § 424; XII, pt. 1, § 341.*
31. 1884–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 4, § 534; The Will to Power § 1029.*
32. 1881–1886, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra, trans. Betz, p. 305.*
33. The Gay Science § 357.
34. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 3, § 378; The Will to Power § 470.*
35. 1885, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 3, § 602; XIV, pt. 1, § 41. Bataille's citation is inaccurate.*
36. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, *II, bk. 3, § 619; The Will to Power § 600.*
37. Beyond Good and Evil § 8. *Walter Kaufmann translates the Latin lines in a footnote as "The ass arrived, beautiful and most brave." Trans.*

38. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, I, bk. 2, § 26; XIII § 225.
39. Beyond Good and Evil § 22. *Selection modified. Trans.*
40. The Gay Science § 382.
41. The Gay Science, *Preface*, § 3.
42. Beyond Good and Evil § 296. *Selection modified. Trans.*
43. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Gift-Giving Virtue*, § 3.
44. Ibid.
45. The Gay Science § 106.
46. Oeuvres, ed. Kröner, XI, p. 164.
47. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *On the Tarantulas*.
48. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *On Self-Overcoming. Selection modified. Trans.*
49. Beyond Good and Evil § 73. *Selection modified. Trans.*
50. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Gift-Giving Virtue*.
51. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *Upon the Blessed Isles*.
52. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, § 540; The Will to Power § 1049.
53. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, I, bk. 2, § 27; XII, pt. 1, § 397.
54. 1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 585; XI, pt. 2, § 58.
55. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 352; XII, pt. 1, § 327.
56. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 464; The Will to Power § 1052.
57. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *Upon the Blessed Isles*.
58. 1885–86, *La Volonté de Puissance*, I, bk. 1, § 45; XIII, § 56.
59. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 548; XIV, pp. 394–5.
60. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue*, § 4.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue*, § 3.
67. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Old and New Tablets*, § 19.
68. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *The Convalescent*, § 2.
69. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 4, *On the Higher Men*, § 6.
70. 1887, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 216; The Will to Power § 910.
71. The Gay Science § 2. *Selection modified. Trans.*
72. The Gay Science § 293.
73. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 280; The Will to Power § 912.
74. The Gay Science § 33. *Selection modified. Trans.*
75. “We strive for the forbidden,” from Ovid’s *Amores* III, 4, 17. *Trans.*
76. Beyond Good and Evil § 227.
77. The Gay Science § 24.
78. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 23; XIV, pt. 2, § 291.

79. Beyond Good and Evil, *Preface*.
80. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *On the Spirit of Gravity*, § 1.
81. Ecce Homo, *Preface*, § 2.
82. The Gay Science § 153.
83. Beyond Good and Evil § 223. *Selection modified. Trans.*
84. 1882–1884, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 50; XII, pt. 2, § 551.
85. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4. § 396; The Will to Power § 1039.
86. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 544; The Will to Power § 991.
87. The Gay Science § 183.
88. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 3 § 381; XIV pt. 1, § 291.
89. The Gay Science § 107.
90. The Gay Science § 256. *Sit venia verbo: "Forgive the word."* Trans.
91. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *Reading and Writing*.
92. 1884, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 3 § 377; XIV, pt. 1, § 25.
93. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 589; XIV, pt. 2, § 303.
94. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 492; XII, pt. 1, § 14.
95. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 4, *The Drunken Song*, § 10.
96. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *On the Great Longing*.
97. 1887–1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 3 § 141; The Will to Power § 749.
98. The Gay Science § 32.
99. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On Free Death*.
100. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *Reading and Writing*.
101. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 4, *Drunken Song*, § 10.
102. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Seven Seals*, § 6.
103. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 529; XII, pt. 1, § 242.
104. The Gay Science § 314.
105. The Gay Science § 270.
106. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 377; The Will to Power § 918.
107. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *On the Spirit of Gravity*, § 1.
108. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *On the Famous Wise Men*.
109. 1887–1888, La Volonté de Puissance, I, bk. 1, § 22; XV, pt. 2, *preface*, § 3.
110. On the Genealogy of Morals, III, § 13. *English translation by Walter Kaufmann in The Basic Writings of Nietzsche (New York: Random House, 1968)*.
111. Beyond Good and Evil § 76.
112. 1885, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 3, § 322; XV § 91.
113. 1885, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 541; The Will to Power § 990.
114. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *On the Great Longing*.
115. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *On the Famous Wise Men*.

- 116. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 3*, *On the Great Longing*.
- 117. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 1*, *On Free Death*.
- 118. *Ibid.*
- 119. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 408; *XVI*, *pp. 436–40*.
- 120. Beyond Good and Evil, *Preface*. *Selection modified*. *Trans.*
- 121. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 4*, *On the Higher Man*, § 4.
- 122. Beyond Good and Evil § 292.
- 123. See *Twilight of the Idols, Maxims and Arrows*, § 8.
- 124. 1887, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 489; The Will to Power §

934. Selection modified. Trans.

- 125. On the Genealogy of Morals, *III*, § 8.
- 126. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 4*, *The Last Supper*.
- 127. Beyond Good and Evil § 44. *Selection modified*. *Trans.*
- 128. The Gay Science, *Preface*, § 3. *Selection modified*. *Trans.*
- 129. Beyond Good and Evil § 225.
- 130. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 513; *XII*, *pt. 1*, § 417.
- 131. 1882–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 572; *XIV*, *pt. 2*, § 25.
- 132. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, *I*, *bk. 2*, § 14; *XIII*, § 550.
- 133. 1882–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 643; *XII*, *p. 409*.
- 134. 1883, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 644; *XIV*, *p. 293*.
- 135. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue*, § 5.
- 136. The Gay Science § 322.
- 137. 1882–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, *trans.* *Betz*, *p. 307*.
- 138. 1883–1888, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 605; *XV*, § 418.
- 139. Beyond Good and Evil § 71.
- 140. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *pt. 2*, *Redemption*.
- 141. 1887, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4* § 384; The Will to Power §

883.

- 142. The Gay Science § 113.
- 143. The Gay Science § 172.
- 144. 1880–1881, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 378; *XI*, *pt. 2*, § 304.
- 145. The Gay Science § 337.
- 146. The Gay Science § 323.
- 147. 1882–1884, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 596; *XII*, *pt. 2*, § 69.
- 148. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 393; *XII*, *pt. 1*, § 23.
- 149. 1882–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 594; *XIV*, *pt. 2*, § 13.
- 150. 1881–1882, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 438; *XII*, *pt. 1*, § 244.
- 151. The Gay Science, *Prelude in German Rhymes*, § 11. *Bataille's quotation* silently omits the middle line: "A place where fool and sage convene." *Trans.*
- 152. 1887, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 519; The Will to Power §

963. Selection modified. Trans.

- 153. 1887, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 519; The Will to Power §

963. Selection modified. Trans.

- 154. 1882–1884, La Volonté de Puissance, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 663; *XII*, *pt. 2*, § 399.

155. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 566; XIV, pt. 2, § 66.
156. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 507; *The Will to Power* § 966.
157. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 20; XIV, pt. 2, § 28. *Selection modified. Trans.*
158. *The Gay Science* § 382.
159. *The Gay Science* § 289.
160. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 3, *The Seven Seals*, § 5.
161. *The Gay Science* § 301.
162. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 4, *On the Higher Men*, § 15.
163. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 3, *The Seven Seals*, § 3. *Selection modified. Trans.*
164. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 2, *On Great Events*.
165. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 2, *The Stillest Hour*. *The notes to Memorandum provide citations for two maxims numbered 163: only one section however appears under this number in the text. The other section, listed first, refers to a passage from Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, On the Flies in the Market Place. Trans.*
166. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 1, *On the Gift-Giving Virtue*, § 2.
167. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Prologue*, § 4. *Misattributed slightly by Bataille, the quotation derives from section 4, not 5, as he says. Trans.*
168. 1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 421; XIV, pt. 2, § 183.
169. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 422; XII, pt. 2, § 536. *Bataille follows the order of La Volonté de Puissance for this and the previous section. Trans.*
170. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 2, *Upon the Blessed Isles*.
171. *Ecce Homo*, *Why I Am a Destiny*, § 3.
172. 1884–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 326.
173. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 611; *The Will to Power* § 913.
174. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 9; XV § 405.
175. 1884–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 325.
176. *Ecce Homo*, *Preface*, § 2.
177. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 2, *Upon the Blessed Isles*.
178. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 1, *On the Three Metamorphoses*.
179. *Beyond Good and Evil* § 205.
180. 1883–1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, I, bk. 2 § 25; *The Will to Power*, § 673.
181. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 3, § 485; XII, pt. 1, § 332.
182. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 518; *The Will to Power* § 929. *Selection modified. Trans.*
183. 1884–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 308.
184. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pt. 1, *On Little Old and Young Woman*.
185. 1887–1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, II, bk. 4, § 517; *The Will to Power* § 949.

186. The Gay Science, *Preface*, § 3.
187. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *Upon the Blessed Isles*.
188. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *On Old and New Tablets*.
189. 1882–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 17; XIV, pt. 2, § 136.
190. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *On The Great Longing*.
191. 1881–1887, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 302.
192. The Gay Science § 161.
193. 1883, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 133; XIII § 894.
194. 1884–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 35; XIII § 361.
195. 1881–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 315.
196. The Gay Science § 21.
197. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 521; The Will to Power § 935.
198. 1882–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, I, bk. 2, § 48; XIII § 405.
199. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *On the Famous Wise Men*.
200. 1887, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 400; The Will to Power § 951.
201. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 4, *The Honey Sacrifice*.
202. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Gift-Giving Virtue*, § 1.
203. Ibid.
204. Ibid. *Here Bataille has taken three short passages from different paragraphs of the same section of Zarathustra, trimmed them greatly and reordered them within a series of similarly trimmed passages, creating an aphoristic effect absent in the original. Trans.*
205. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue*, § 4.
206. The Gay Science § 202.
207. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue*, § 2.
208. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue*, § 1.
209. Ibid. *This and the preceding maxim reverse the order of two paragraphs from the same text. Trans.*
210. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *Self-Overcoming*.
211. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *Child and the Mirror*.
212. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, *Prologue* § 4.
213. Ibid.
214. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Gift-Giving Virtue*, § 1.
215. 1885–1886, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 453; The Will to Power § 846. *Bataille's quotation substantially misquotes Nietzsche here. His version replaces "destruction" with "distinction" in the first sentence. I have followed Nietzsche's original in this case. Trans.*
216. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Old and New Tablets*, § 11.
217. 1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 356; The Will to Power § 944. *Bataille omits only the last sentence of the passage from The Will to Power. Trans.*
218. 1884–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, trans. Betz, p. 334.
219. 1887–1888, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 477; The Will to Power § 866. *Bataille's citation is inaccurate; the quotation appears in La Volonté de Puissance volume 2, not volume 1. Trans.*

220. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 599; *The Will to Power* § 998.
221. *Beyond Good and Evil* § 26.
222. 1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 731; *The Will to Power* § 764. *Following La Volonté de Puissance, Bataille only includes the first of two paragraphs from this note as it appears in The Will to Power. Trans.*
223. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 490; *The Will to Power* § 770. *Bataille quotes only the first of two paragraphs here. Trans.*
224. 1881–1888, *Notes to Ainsi Parlait Zarathoustra*, *trans. Betz*, p. 331.
225. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 3, old and new tablets*, § 12.
226. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 1, On the Gift-Giving Virtue*, § 2. *Bataille's citation is inaccurate. Trans.*
227. 1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4* § 618; *XI*, *pt. 2* § 598.
228. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 13; *XIV*, *pt. 2*, § 298.
229. *The Gay Science* § 358. *Here where Bataille's text has "intellectuals," Nietzsche's text refers to "more spiritual human beings." Trans.*
230. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3* § 22; *XIV*, *pt. 2*, § 296.
231. 1882–1885, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 52; *XIV*, *pt. 2*, § 2. *Selection modified. Trans.*
232. *The Gay Science* § 280.
233. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 3, Seven Seals*, § 2.
234. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 2, The Child with the Mirror*.
235. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 2, On the Famous Wise Men*.
236. *Ibid. Bataille omits a short paragraph from the original and divides the passage into two maxims here. Trans.*
237. *The Gay Science, Preface*, § 3.
238. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 583; *XIV*, *pt. 2*, § 157.
239. *Ecce Homo, Why I Write Such Good Books, Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, § 3.
240. *Beyond Good and Evil* § 193.
241. *The Gay Science* § 293.
242. *Ecce Homo, Why I Write Such Good Books*, § I.
243. 1884, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 374; *XIII* § 726.
244. 1887–1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 555; *The Will to Power* § 801. *Selection modified. Trans.*
245. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 4, On the Higher Men*, § 15.
246. 1885–1886, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *I*, *bk. 1*, § 18; *XIII* § 257.
247. 1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 312; *XI*, *pt. 2*, § 590.
248. 1885–1888, *Oeuvres (Kröner)* *XI*, p. 115.
249. 1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 317; *XI*, *pt. 2*, § 393.
250. 1881–1882, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 615; *XII*, *pt. 1*, § 353.
251. 1880–1881, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 3*, § 313; *XI*, *pt. 2*, § 592.
252. 1888, *La Volonté de Puissance*, *II*, *bk. 4*, § 580; *The Will to Power* § 1038.
253. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *pt. 4, Drunken Song*, § 11.
254. *Beyond Good and Evil* § 30.

255. The Gay Science § 370.
256. The Gay Science § 286.
257. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Old and New Tablets*, § 2.
258. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Old and New Tablets*, § 23.
259. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *Reading and Writing*.
260. Beyond Good and Evil § 294.
261. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 4, *On the Higher Men*, § 18.
262. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 4, *On the Higher Men*, § 16.
263. Ecce Homo, *Why I Am So Wise*, § 5.
264. Beyond Good and Evil § 65a.
265. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Old and New Tablets*, § 5.
266. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Tree on the Mountainside*.
267. Beyond Good and Evil § 229. *Selection modified. Trans.*
268. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 3, *Convalescent*, § 2.
269. 1884–1885, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4 § 550; XIV, pt. 2, § 168.
270. 1882–1884, La Volonté de Puissance, II, bk. 4, § 585; XII, pt. 2, § 422.
271. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Pale Criminal*.
272. Beyond Good and Evil § 227.
273. On the Genealogy of Morals, II, § 20.
274. Beyond Good and Evil § 109.
275. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 1, *On the Adder's Bite*.
276. The Gay Science § 135. *Selection modified. Trans.*
277. The Gay Science § 273.
278. The Gay Science § 274.
279. The Gay Science § 275.
280. Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pt. 2, *The Stillest Hour*.
281. The Gay Science § 326.
282. Beyond Good and Evil § 29.

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Georges Bataille wrote *On Nietzsche* in the final months of the Nazi occupation of France in order to cleanse the German philosopher of the “stain of Nazism.” More than merely a treatise on Nietzsche, the book is as much a work of ethics in which thought is put to the test of experience and experience pushed to its limits. At once personal and political, it was written as an act of war, its publication contingent upon the German retreat. The result is a poetic and philosophical—and occasionally harrowing—record of life during wartime.

Following *Inner Experience* and *Guilty*, *On Nietzsche* is the third volume of Bataille’s *Summa Atheologica*. Haunted by the recognition that “existence cannot be at once autonomous and viable,” herein the author yearns for community from the depths of personal isolation and transforms Nietzsche’s *will to power* into his own *will to chance*.

This new translation includes *Memorandum*, a selection of 280 passages from Nietzsche’s works edited and introduced by Bataille. Originally published separately, Bataille planned to include the text in future editions of *On Nietzsche*. This edition also features the full notes and annotations from the French edition of Bataille’s *Oeuvres Complètes*, as well as an incisive introductory essay by Stuart Kendall that situates the work historically, biographically, and philosophically.

GEORGES BATAILLE (1897–1962), a medievalist librarian by training, founded the College of Sociology and the secret society Acéphale. He was equally famous for his contributions to French literature, art criticism, anthropology, philosophy, and theology. Bane of theologians, existentialists, and surrealists during his lifetime, he became an essential reference for the poststructuralist generation of French intellectuals, including Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida.

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